



Disjunctive Strategies of Empire

Colonial Narratives and Readings in
International Relations

by

Kong Leong Yew

BA Indiana University, Bloomington
MA Australian National University

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Adelaide, Adelaide, South Australia

Department of Politics
University of Adelaide
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DISJUNCTIVE STRATEGIES OF EMPIRE

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For my parents
who supported
and waited
during their son's sojourns
in foreign lands

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Abstract

DISJUNCTIVE STRATEGIES OF EMPIRE **Colonial Narratives and Readings in International Relations**

One of the most important contributions of colonial discourse theory to the study of imperialism is the ability to survey the interaction between the Western metropolis and its colonial peripheries as an effect of more Manichean, enduring, and profound power relations. Instead of confining colonialism to physical and material forms of governance, territorial acquisition, overseas outposts, and so on, colonial discourse further elaborates the texts, mindsets, and prejudices ingrained on both the colonizers and the colonized that legitimize the establishment of empire. But in many cases the examples used in colonial discourse, such as anthropology, history, literature, and travel writing, appear to have limited applicability beyond their deployment during the height of Europe's empires prior to the early 20th century. With the end of the second world war, the emergence of the United States, the inculcation of an "international" world order, and the creation of newer academic disciplines, there is a need to reassess the relation between colonial discourse and imperialism in recent times. This thesis argues that the discipline of international relations (IR) usefully demonstrates how colonial discourse can be recognized as a transformative and self-rejuvenating entity. While the earlier disciplines and colonial writings tracked the mentality of the colonizer by representing the colonial world as exotic, primitive, barbaric, and thereby giving licence to the civilizing mission, moral, social, and political changes in the postwar world necessitated a different set of strategies. Such strategies had to relocate articulations of otherness within the scope of contemporary knowledge-production while at the same time continue to promote the presence of the West as something always above and beyond the non-West. These continued assertions of power are seen in IR and they particularly accentuate "disjuncture" as a prime feature of those strategies. As a discipline IR imparts an objective way of imagining the world, a microcosm teeming with sovereign states jostling for power and primacy. But beyond such description of sameness, IR implicitly possesses an attitude that is split between the international political process as a truly new formation and a residual imperial desire that continuously vacillates between a need to dominate (especially by the United States) and the requirements of moral rectitude. In a number of cross-readings between colonial texts and IR, this thesis demonstrates that the vacillation is constituted by the continued displacement of the non-West to another time and place, the anxiety associated with never being fully in control of the colonies or the potential loss of power, and the self-referential nature of anti-imperialism, among others.

Thesis Submission Statement

This work contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, to be made available for loan and photocopying.

Leong Yew
7th July 2000

Preface

Disjunctive Strategies of Empire demonstrates how it is possible to think of colonial discourse and the literature of international relations as productive of the dilemmas faced by western culture in coming to terms with contemporary forms of imperialism. As such it is a fusion of cultural studies and critical international relations. But beyond this intention, this work has an underlying story that needs to be told. For that we must return to the late 1980s, to the Midwestern American university town of Bloomington, Indiana, where the political science climate was undergoing moderate transformation. At that time no one knew what the world would look like after the turn of the decade. Although the academic community was abuzz with the “new détente,” Mikhail Gorbachev’s restructuring of Soviet society, and the Reagan/Bush administrations’ courting of the USSR, international relations continued to be taught just as it was years before; there were courses in the politics of other countries, US national security, as well as foreign policy. As an undergraduate student there I was a recipient of what I now consider as a gentle indoctrination of the American view of international politics. Whatever I was taught seemed to make sense and whatever theories I came across, I understood as objective and universally applicable. Hence the “mimic man” in me came to accept US foreign policy as pseudo-theory of world salvation.

Ironically it was also in the same institution that I came under the tutelage of the late John P. Lovell, whose founding of the Indiana Center for Global Change and World Peace during those years, I must admit, remains a mystery to me. John was at that time becoming increasingly fascinated with the relationship between culture and international relations, an enterprise that I felt was particularly fraught with limitations and shortcomings. After all what use was the concept of culture to a discipline that sought to transcend time and space by implementing a scientific agenda? Culture was too

ephemeral, too difficult to quantify, and most of all too emotional. For those remaining years of the 1980s I stuck vehemently to *realpolitik*, preferring a research agenda that analyzed US foreign relations as a function of some invisible propensity and to enliven that through treaties, rational policy goals, and the movement of troops and military equipment.

Sometime in the early 1990s, belatedly, came the great unraveling. As quickly as the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989 and as the Soviet Union disintegrated a few years later, my faith in international relations as studied and practiced in the United States all but vanished. And in those spaces vacated by mainstream international relations, I started filling up with another emerging fad, that of postmodernism. So between French postmodernism/poststructuralism and feminist theory that I read, I also dabbled with genres I would never have associated with the discipline years ago: popular fiction, cinema, poetry, and art. I slowly came to appreciate the sophistication culture adds to the study of international relations, and while I have fewer answers now than I *thought* I had back in the '80s, that increased complexity is more satisfying.

The story behind *Disjunctive Strategies of Empire* is, therefore, a very personal journey that continues to be written over and over again. While I situate this thesis within colonial discourse, suggesting a step beyond my previous fascination with realist power politics and postmodernism, these areas continue to leave behind some residual traces showing that the path behind all journeys never disappears. To those who helped me along that journey I must thank John Lovell, whose teaching so many years ago started me off in directions I never thought possible. I learned of John's passing while I was halfway through this thesis, and even though I knew that he had contracted a certain illness, I was fairly confident that I would one day return to Bloomington where I could adequately discuss his ideas about culture and international relations. I will never know if there are similarities in our understanding of that term, but whatever that may be my gratitude is profound. At this current stage of the journey I must also thank my PhD

supervisor, Pal Ahluwalia, for always pushing me beyond postmodernism, something that I had become a bit too comfortable with when I first started on this project. To a large extent the idea of critiquing international relations as an *imperial* discipline as opposed to a *colonial* discipline (like anthropology) was his, which I have transformed into its present incarnation. There are also a number of other people at the Department of Politics, University of Adelaide, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude: the departmental administrators Chris McElhinney and Tina Esca; and fellow students, past and present, Angela Clare, Kylie Heneker, Michael Howes, Narelle Lehane, Tanya Lyons, Brigid Mahoney, Don McMaster, Wajid Ranjha, Victoria Reynolds, Julie Tonkin, and Regina Wilson. I would also like to thank the International Programs Office at the University of Adelaide for providing me with a study environment free from financial worries. Their award of the (now renamed) Overseas Postgraduate Research Scholarship and the University of Adelaide Scholarship is deeply appreciated.

To my parents I owe a tremendous amount of gratitude that words cannot express. I can only say that without their love, support, and their unselfish sacrifice of my presence at home this work would never have been possible. While in Australia, I have also been a frequent guest of the Brunero family, and I greatly treasure the hospitality, kindness, and concern they have shown to me. The last note of thanks goes to my wife, Donna Brunero, who, more than anyone, showed me that there is life outside of my cerebral peregrinations and that there is something more human, more uplifting than being trapped in my most nihilist and stoical postmodernist state of mind. She never gave up and above all showed me that my journey does not have to be undertaken alone.

Leong Yew
Adelaide
July 2000



Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Strategies of Colonial Discourse

There is a deeply ambivalent undercurrent affecting how peoples of the west imagine the world today. At a time when Europe administered and dominated much of the non-west, the world was segregated into two administrative structures. One of which was a small, elite group of sovereign states that was originally comprised of European countries—but which eventually expanded in the early twentieth century to include the United States and Japan—came to represent the “international” world. Unlike the present times, where there is a tendency to conflate the terms international and world with each other, they were very particular substances, the former connoting an agglomeration of interacting sovereign nation-states, while the latter suggested a more totalistic entity that contains the former. In contrast to this, the other administrative structure was a chaotic mix of colonial territories, protectorates, and dominions in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific whose external affairs were centralized through Europe. Thus even though the cultures and peoples living outside the international system have had their unique histories of cross-cultural contact, diplomatic dealings, confrontations, and other conflicts, they were never seriously considered part of international history because these events took place outside any political and diplomatic framework that the west could understand.

With the end of the second world war, the collapse of the European empires, and the creation of independent states out of the former colonial realm, most western histories recognize these two administrative structures to be formally dissolved. In

effect the passing of European rule in most parts of the world only meant the expansion of the international system, conjuring the impression of a radically new world that was chaotic, dynamic, and complex. At the outset these histories seem to promote a number ideas. First, the mechanism by which state sovereignty was inscribed over former colonies was to create new political communities and allegiances while sensitizing new ruling elites to activities like foreign intervention. Second, for much of the ex-colonial world, the achievement of sovereignty must vindicate a teleology of imperialism, for it is through colonial tutelage that the institutions and knowledge necessary for participation in the international system could be developed. Third, even if the principles behind the international system was European in origin, its postwar composition and structure made it a very different creature, with revamped moral positions, new hegemonic actors on the scene, and changed ways of settling international disputes. But beyond these western allusions of the new international world, there is a more divisive and difficult picture of how the colonial past relates to the international present and of how the former colonial world reacts or is subordinated to the new hegemonic states. While each state has different internal cultures, what matters is that their behaviours and needs in the international system are believed to be structurally universal. This gives the impression that we are now living in a world that is eventually homogenizing or coming together. However, existing at the same time is another tendency to conceive of each state as having different capabilities or power resources to justify those behaviours or to satisfy those needs.¹

¹See especially the works of Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979) and *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959). Waltzian neo-realism, as the ideas contained in these works have now been called, is an attempt to place international structures at the heart of world politics. In principle it understands world politics as a system that is now beyond the control of any group of people and that conflict is an inevitability of that system. In *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz divides the world system between its structure and interacting units but merges a sense of universalism without eradicating the role of powerful actors. He declares that the

As western understandings of the international world do not recognize the coexistence of these similarities and differences as contradictory, there is a fundamentally irresolvable connection with imperialism. Indeed, the perceived newness of the international system was a rectification of sorts for the travesties of imperialism, and the United States' avowed postwar support of self-determination was considered to be the most reasonable policy with respect to the decolonizing states. Yet in creating the newly decolonized states as mirror images of a European system, the west stood a strong chance in obscuring its own position of dominance and preeminence. Thus there was a necessity in creating another mechanism of separating the west from the rest. In the international system a solution to this lay in a number of constructs. The creation of the term, superpower, euphemistically substitutes for imperial power, suggesting a country's structural possession of power while remaining vague about its use and avoiding the moral aversion to a concept like imperialism. Similarly concepts like "the South" as opposed to "the North" or the Third and Fourth Worlds create an illusion of newness in that they are very different political entities from what they were before independence. However, they remain in a position inferior to how the west currently conceives itself and, if anything, are transpositions of earlier representations. If these places were once primitive and uncivilized, they are now variously represented as impoverished, war-torn, or subjected to despotic rule. In contrast the west conceives of itself as having evolved beyond these problems, thus permanently deferring the Third World to another time and place.

This difficulty in placing the contemporary record of international system as either something that is novel or as a shadow of a more enduring history is not necessarily a unique development of the times. More appropriately the "new"

"ordering principle" of such a structure is both an anarchy common to all as well as a hierarchy. Then he claims that all states were functionally similar before arguing that the only

international world stands to be an interesting case study of the way colonial discourse relates to imperialism. By colonial discourse I am referring to the terrain of critical knowledge that was introduced by Edward Said and significantly developed by numerous scholars thereafter. In general, colonial discourse derives much of its theoretical stance from a certain intellectualism of dissent: a bit of Foucauldian poststructuralism here and a bit of Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis there. These discrepant ideas generate views of imperialism and colonialism that go beyond the material assumptions of formal territorial control, legal arrangements, the maintenance of vast shipping and communication networks, and the physical stationing of troops and local police. In effect colonial discourse applies these ideas to surveying the language structures, the texts, the way knowledges are produced, and the extent of imperial power in implanting certain worldviews on the minds of both the colonized and the colonizer. By using different techniques colonial discourse came to be the instrument by which empire was legitimized. For the peoples at the metropolis, colonial discourse was a dense network of texts that depicted the colonial world as exotic, barbaric, and primitive. As for the colonized, the colonial overlords became their saviours, generating new needs for different physical or intellectual products of the west.² For example, colonial discourse relies heavily on texts as objects in which imperial power and knowledge intersect. Especially before the early twentieth century

difference was the “distribution of capability,” meaning power. Conveniently this allows states like the US to be superior even when universalist claims are made about the world.

²This is a highly contentious point and it is unlikely that western colonizers were successful in this attempt. As Homi Bhabha and others have shown, the ideas about Christianity, civilization, and so forth could never be communicated perfectly to the colonized without the intervention of a preexisting mindset or culture. While it may appear that the colonized have become mirror images of the west, the image that is returned is a highly distorted one that subversively undermines the power of colonialism in the first place. The statement made here is, in this regard, one of the overt strategies implemented by the colonizers to produce an arbitrary consent to rule rather than the actual result or transaction within colonial discourse. See for example Homi K. Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817,” *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 102–122.

the British or French empires were constituted through texts in anthropology, geography, history, imaginative fiction, and travel writing. With the exception of fiction these texts were regarded as truthful accounts and many of their authors were respected scientists, researchers, adventurers, missionaries, and explorers who were commissioned by universities, churches, courts, and governments. Colonial discourse views the claims of objectivity by these texts as dangerous because not only are they invested with the interest to legitimize imperialism, they also form the basis on which further notions of empire developed. In a word these texts have highly malleable ways of representing the non-west. If the concern was to conquer a piece of a foreign land, geography and science stepped in to inscribe that land as *terra nullius* and its occupants as not quite human. If the aim was the spread of Christianity then theology and anthropology collaborated to construct the colonized as people in touch with their spirituality and therefore capable of being redeemed. And if it was some intrinsic, gendered, emotional, or affiliative longing that needed to be fulfilled, then imaginative fiction, art, and travel literature sought to represent the colonized as erotic, sensual, or childlike.

This is a simplified illustration of colonial discourse and these textual samples are tropological as the complicity between text and empire is by far more complicated. I mentioned colonial discourse because of its usefulness in reading or re-reading texts written in recent times as well as in preceding centuries as things that provide invaluable insight into the strategies the west employed or continues to use in order to impose its imperial will. Most critical works examining colonial discourse are conducted largely in English literature or literary criticism and in more recent times come under the appellation of cultural studies. Unsurprisingly, the texts selected have largely been works of fiction, art, as well as pseudo-scientific projects like travel journals or anthropological fieldwork. In many cases these were produced during the

height of European imperialism in the 19th century and rely on prejudiced representations to convey colonial discourse. Otherwise stated, these texts use the colonial power/knowledge connection to represent the colonized as inferior to the European world. As projects in colonial discourse analysis continue to integrate newer theoretical approaches and to revisit the historical text-empire relationship, there have been a number of interesting projects that attempt to expand its coverage. For instance, the application of colonial power and knowledge to imperial texts is not so rational and straightforward but is mediated through fantasy and desire.³ In addition even if formal colonialism has ended there are many newer texts that continue to either express nostalgia for the old days of empire or contain disguised longing for domination.⁴ Thus what people in the west see in television or at the cinema, the types of books they read in recent times inform contemporary colonial discourse.

However dynamic colonial discourse analysis is at promoting a more sophisticated understanding of postwar imperialism, there are a number of shortcomings with regard to the ambivalence of western world imagination. Since the end of the second world war and the ascent of the United States to global supremacy, the political world has come to be expressed through the discipline of international relations (IR). While the texts produced through IR have generally fallen under the rubric of the social sciences and that most of them were written after formal decolonization, they have never been seriously considered worthy of colonial discourse

³See Gail Ching-Liang Low, *White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁴Ziauddin Sardar's works are relevant in this case because he uses so many examples from contemporary western popular culture to show how pervasive imperialism continues to be in present times. In his recent *Orientalism* (Buckingham and Philadelphia, Open University Press, 1999) Sardar posits that orientalism as colonial discourse far transcends the presumptions of its historical and geographical scope. Indeed with the American appropriation of orientalism, even Europe finds itself being represented in US popular culture through the orientalist tropes used during the time of European imperialism.

analysis.⁵ Yet the scope of IR provides an extremely fertile ground to reconceptualize the way one thinks about colonialism and imperialism. Indeed, many of the academic disciplines that were used so productively during the heyday of European imperialism like anthropology and geography were extremely indispensable in representing the non-western peoples in ways that were amenable to colonialism. This process of “othering” undoubtedly continues into the present day, but with the onset of the cold war in the late 1940s these disciplines came to be eclipsed by a more pressing need in discovering new political enemies or potential conflict zones in the world than in discovering strange cultures. For the United States and its western allies, international relations became an enormous industry far surpassing its original intent as an academic discipline and reaching an audience beyond intellectual or policy-making circles. As a discipline that incorporated expertise from history, international law, philosophy, and political science, IR’s broadest goal was the study of world politics. As tensions escalated between the United States and the Soviet Union, the conflict became globalized, engulfing the newly decolonized states into a highly polarized world system. IR was therefore most adequately poised to provide public education on matters relating to world political problems. Since the cold war was so large in scope, weaving in issues on ideology, militarization, and nuclearization, everywhere in the west world politics came to be inculcated as a personal matter affecting each citizen’s security. As such IR spilled out of textbooks, esoteric journals, and policy briefing papers and onto public knowledge and popular culture.

In constructing danger IR was capable of creating a dominant imagination of the world. In other words, out of the many possible associations with the idea of the world, IR has successfully made the political aspect of the world one of the most

⁵Pal Ahluwalia and Michael Sullivan, “Edward Said and the World,” *International Relations Still an American Social Science?*, eds. Daryl Jarvis and Robert Crawford (New York: State

immediate ones to come to mind. But even as the United States uses the knowledge garnered from IR to demagogically press for international “freedom,” such as a liberal world order, the protection of international sovereignty, and the refusal to allow any one state to dominate the international system, the notion of imperialism has virtually been absent from the discipline. At best IR recycles imperialism as a preexisting condition that in history refers to a type of world political system, the disproportionate possession and use of power, or in more recent times as something suggestive of interstate expansionism. The discipline is unaware of its own constitutive role in the imperial project. Let me explain this further. If certain disciplines were used at the height of the British and French empires to justify imperialism, they would have employed various strategies that were particular to colonial discourse at that time. With the transformations that took place after the end of European imperialism, the deployment of power in the new international system could not work so effectively if the earlier strategies of colonial discourse were merely transplanted. They had to adapt to physical changes that had taken place while also retaining the more enduring and sometimes unconscious will for the west to dominate. If anthropology, for instance, contributes to colonialism by allowing tribal societies to be depicted as crude and primitive, such strategies do not necessarily work in IR. Typically there must be some element within the discipline that continues to promote these representations of otherness while also accounting for newer developments such as American anti-imperialism, increasing moral aversion to imperialism, and institutions like the Non-Aligned Movement.

To this end, the present work attempts to extend the “coverage” of colonial discourse into the realm of international relations. Its most immediate objective is to

University Press, forthcoming). Phillip Darby and A.O. Paolini, “Bridging International Relations and Postcolonialism,” *Alternatives*, 19.3 (Summer 1994): 371–398.

locate the intersection in which it becomes difficult to think of contemporary imperialism without also considering IR. // This relationship between IR and imperialism is difficult to express, given the limitation modernity currently imposes on language through rationality, the enforcement of boundaries, and the essentialism used in making objects distinct and separate. // For the purposes here, this thesis stresses that IR and imperialism are an instance of disjuncture rather than delineation, referring to the ambivalence that at times make them appear so different but also intimately reliant on each other. // Instead of simply arguing that IR promotes imperialism by creating a totalizing imagination of the world for both the west and non-west or that imperialism is that which has created the conditions by which the rest of the world could unproblematically appreciate IR, the IR-imperialism disjuncture is more dynamic. // This involves thinking of the relationship as an eclectic collaboration of contradictory elements, impulses, psychical properties, and cultural uncertainties. // At times IR and imperialism tack backwards and forwards, between texts written during and after the time of European imperialism, and between European and US imperialism. // At other times the disjuncture swings between the particularity of America's present self-perception of a great power and the notion of western dominance as a larger and more enduring entity. // Still on other occasions IR may rely on cultural texts that express certain nostalgia or longing for such aspects of imperialism as colonial travel and adventure. Whatever the case may be such vacillations become the crucial strategy in postwar colonial discourse because they are able to camouflage a preexisting imperial will under a mantle of increasing moral consciousness. In the rest of this introductory chapter I explain further how this work attempts to demonstrate the disjuncture between IR and imperialism.

Colonial Discourse and International Relations

This work is intended for two different readerships. The first is a growing group of scholars within international relations that has since the late 1980s begun to import feminist theory, critical theory, and continental philosophy into the discipline. These scholars have made the discipline more inclusive by questioning its boundaries, its connections with power and knowledge, and bringing to one's attention the whole host of interests that underpin it. While critical IR texts have implicated gender, national identity, among others, with the production of the discipline, imperialism's involvement with IR or the role of colonial discourse in constituting the discipline remain largely unexplored. The second readership comprises of those individuals working in areas that may be called cultural studies. This may be a blanket term for any interdisciplinary venture that has a component critical of the cultural production of texts, but in this case I refer specifically to the literary critics who have surveyed the connections between so many disciplines and imperialism but have not considered international relations as one of them. In some cases, these two readerships intersect and scholars within either group may have some knowledge of the other. This thesis therefore, presumes that the reader has some prior knowledge of international relations and colonial discourse but attempts to more fully engage both readerships. With this in mind I have tried to be as discursive and revealing as possible, cutting back on the jargon and terminology that are peculiar to each group without compromising on the detail required in addressing the various texts.

For now let me situate the two areas of international relations and colonial discourse as they relate to the context of this thesis. By referring to the "discipline of international relations" I have in mind the study, research, writing, and teaching of world politics as it relates to the international state system that originated in Europe and which was perpetuated across the globe at the end of the second world war. At the

same time the discipline cannot be considered as an enterprise exclusive only to scholars, diplomats, and policymakers but diffuses into the realm of mass-distributed public knowledge. What this means is that even though world politics (read intra-European affairs) has been a subject of study as far back as during the collapse of the Roman Empire,⁶ it is with the end of the first world war that the discipline came to be recognized as a systematic and distinct field of study. If anything most histories of IR regard the founding of the Woodrow Wilson Chair of International Politics at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth as the starting point of the discipline and, in particular, attribute the renewed faith in liberalism as the principle that makes the discipline possible. On one side of it, this liberalism heightened the optimism for a peaceful world made through international institutions and cooperation, and on the other side also meant the doing away of Europe's record of secret diplomacy. Thus becoming a celebration of a new form of democratic polity, IR came to exemplify public access to knowledge that was heretofore placed in elite and confidential levels.

Although there was much activity in the discipline between its inception and the end of the second world war, it is the post 1945 IR in which this thesis is most interested. While during its early phase IR did become "public," its concerns were extremely selective. For instance, works like Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion* or E.H. Carr's *Twenty Years' Crisis* were directly influenced by the political events that transpired in interwar Europe. Furthermore this Eurocentric tendency was also supplemented by philosophical debates about the nature of man and the behaviour of states, which culminated in the realist assessment that the outbreak of the second world war demonstrated the futility of international peace and cooperation. Post 1945

⁶Torbjørn L. Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory*, 2nd ed. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997).

⁷Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion* (New York: Putnam's, 1933); E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (London: Papermac, 1995 [1946]).

IR is therefore marked by a number of characteristics. First, the onset of the cold war and the proliferation of new independent states created different material circumstances with which IR was conceived. Even though the cold war was a dispute between two protagonists, the way it encompassed the world and how they took their battlegrounds to the Third World underscored the impossibility of a political vision of the world that was arrived at consensually. Just as the cold war preoccupied much of IR's agenda, the role of the United States in the discipline is another notable feature. As it overtook Britain as the new imperial power, the US came to dominate the field of IR, imposing a new research program as well as different approaches and methodologies. It is in the US typically that IR became more positivist and ambivalent. It is also there that the discipline's popularity surged as the universities sought to offer ever more undergraduate courses in those areas. For this reason, the IR that is referred to in this thesis has a strong US orientation.

This jostling between British and American interpretation of world politics leads to the second characteristic of IR, which is the persistent tension between the need to celebrate or refer to its western origins while simultaneously lauding its universal applicability. In many cases, IR scholars talk as though every state in the world has similar perceptions about the world beyond its borders, thus compelling every state to behave in the same way when it comes to relating with others or accumulating power resources. The scholars may surreptitiously agree that the world today is very much western in design but resign themselves to a certain status quo, a déjà la that insists on pragmatic advice about what to do in the present time than to revisit the historical conditions that led us there initially. But for the west a social science that upholds universalism has its dangers as well because it could eradicate the specific and valued western philosophical traditions that have created the discipline in the first place. Consequently the presence of these tensions may invoke some to split British and

American IR into two, stressing that while British IR tends to be more hermeneutical and mindful of its western philosophical content, it is the US version of the discipline that is more blatantly universalist. Rather than dwelling on this simplification I prefer to see these universalistic and particularistic tensions as a strategy to totalize western intellectualism. US and British conceptions of IR may be distinct substances but, collaboratively, they ensure that universalism and particularism are opposite sides of the same coin of western domination. If US international relations universalizes then it is a move to subsume global cultural differences under a false sense of commonality. Similarly, the frequent allusions to IR's western philosophical roots continue to indirectly remind those who study IR that, notwithstanding the universalism there is a separation between a privileged lot of peoples who were responsible for creating the discipline and those who are merely participants.⁸

Third, another characteristic of postwar IR is its diversity, as produced by the perceived needs of the changing international system. While at one time IR had a relatively small number of subfields, there are today significantly many more areas of specialization, creating various university departments or research institutes with their unique expertise or representation of different partisan interests. Particularly IR's focus revolved around a few "traditional" areas like international theory, strategic studies, and foreign policy or area studies. This makes sense as they filled the needs of the US as it entered into the cold war. But as the international realm came perceptively to consist of more activities like the rejuvenation of international institutions, the possibility of détente, the increase in economic transactions, the rise of the Asia-Pacific economies, and the looming presence of terrorism, newer subfields were created. IR

⁸In studies on international relations western philosophical tradition still continue to be celebrated without any lessening in the presumption that IR is universal. Books like David Boucher, *Political Theories of International Relations: From Thucydides to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) traces IR back to its Roman-Hellenistic heritage and to its

now includes (not in any order) peace and conflict studies, foreign policy analysis, comparative politics, regional politics, international political economy, and globalization theory. As a discipline, its impact on a country like the US can be quite complex, with its numerous university departments, research institutes, and publication activity having considerable influence on the public and the government. For example, these include providing of public advisory to the government and media, training students to eventually fill up the diplomatic ranks, State and Defense Departments as well as the intelligence machinery. And not to mention IR also serves in partisan interests for such research groups like the American Enterprise Institute or Brookings Institution to maintain their conservative or liberal clientele. The enormity of the discipline appears to make it difficult for IR to be seen in a singular sense and anyone attempting to link imperialism to it could be accused of oversimplification.

This leads to the fourth characteristic concerning the narrowness of international relations. This seems to contradict the diversity of the discipline, but when considered as part of a larger cultural production or power/knowledge relations, IR is especially selective about its methodological framework, the type of data or information it chooses to include or exclude, or even the philosophy that should govern its assumptions. If one starts off with the broadest possible source for the discipline, one finds the interlocking strictures of modernity, masculinity, and class. Together these produce and enforce certain rules about what is allowed into the discipline, resulting in similarities across the purported diversity of IR. As a result it becomes feasible to talk as if IR had a mainstream, one that was positivist, gendered, and realist.⁹ Hence, we may have scholars who disagree on the type of interpretative lens they should use such

modern European connections. But how is this to be considered relevant to IR scholars outside the west?

⁹For a good study on how IR's theoretical canons have come to be monopolized by the realist paradigm, see John A. Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: A Critique* (London: Frances Pinter, 1983).

as realism or liberalism,¹⁰ or they may prefer the analysis of military power rather than international trade and finance as being more decisive, but necessarily defer to the mainstream as the basis on which all intra-disciplinary dialogues can be effectively conducted. Typically the faith in IR as a social science capable of objectively describing a pre-given world, the assumption that communities in the world can be abstracted, categorized, and separated, and that these communities interact with each other through some means like the sovereign state or international organization are elements of these conversations. By retracing the diversity of IR back to its mainstream it becomes possible to conceive of the discipline as something more monolithic or representative of a collective social effort without appearing to be essentializing. As the present work intends to examine the broad field of IR with imperialism, I do not intend to gloss over the wide scope of the discipline but suggest that it would be more productive to think of IR as the sum of its cultural origins. Therefore this thesis does not pretend to be systematic in its approach to IR but selects a number of readings from realist IR theory, post-cold war IR, and postmodernism to instantiate the disjunctive forces present in contemporary colonial discourse.

These four characteristics are not the standard descriptions of the discipline one would find in conventional textbooks of international relations. They do, however, provide a preliminary glimpse into a field ridden with tensions and contradictions between its perceived origins, scope, participants, and advocates. Such ambiguity

¹⁰Realism and liberalism are two ubiquitous terms in IR theory. As large philosophical systems in their own right these paradigms provide an interpretive lens through which international behaviour could be understood. Realism extends the philosophies of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau to the relations between different groups of people. It extrapolates the selfish, insatiable, and self-preserving nature of human beings onto world communities, and as such we live in an anarchic, conflicting world in which states relentlessly compete for status and power. Liberalism on the other hand derives from the theories of Adam Smith, Joseph Schumpeter, J.S. Mill, Locke, and Kant. It upholds the basic liberties of the individuals and believes that the pursuit of these liberties will not jeopardize the order and well-being of the community as a whole. International liberalism is therefore the faith that the world is intrinsically capable of peace and cooperation. In both cases there is a conflation between the individual and a larger collectivity like the sovereign state.

parallels the way colonial discourse implements its strategies. What does this mean? A reader who is staunchly located in the social sciences will attempt to downplay these contradictions and find ways of solidifying the realm of tangible and quantifiable objects. The terms, colonialism and imperialism, will always remain problematic for him or her because they are hideously value-laden and unspecific. Yet there remain no better terms with which to describe the material inequities caused by the relationship between dominant powers like Britain and the US and subordinate entities like their colonies. For the social scientist, therefore, formal evidence like treaties, legal agreements, and the presence of military forces become indispensable in their testing of whether colonialism exists in perpetuity. It is unsurprising that with the "official" end of colonialism, the social sciences prefer to either do away with the term and create a new concept that is more reflective of the transformed world conditions or to use it strictly as an historical artifact. But what about the extension of western power in present times and do attempts at currently reconstructing these transformations sufficiently provide the illusion that we are living under very different circumstances than during the days of formal colonialism? This thesis presumes that lying underneath the dynamism of the social sciences is a highly efficient mechanism that integrates a constantly changing perception of the world, new moral principles, new academic approaches, new critical consciousness, and so on, with a fixed imperial mentality. These two sides should never be considered as separate entities as social scientists would have it; that the two sides are recognized to exist but the objective of the social science is to become more aware of the latter so that it can be vanquished through the Enlightenment's progressive nature. Instead these two sides are incommensurable, they collide on some occasions, bypass at other times, or even cooperate for a more Manichean purpose. Hence this is what I am referring to when I say strategies of colonial discourse. Especially in a period of time when colonialism or imperialism

have become more troubled words, they possess a resilience to embed themselves in the production of global culture using these two flip sides. On the one hand, these changes in the representation of the world give the impression that people in the west are trying to disassociate themselves from a history of injustices, but on the other hand, there is a tacit refusal to give up on an intrinsic aspiration for greatness and power.

The strategy of colonial discourse is thus a system of imperfect representation that adapts to certain changes in the way the non-west is perceived without a fundamental alteration to a deep-seated imperial will. Especially at the beginning of the twenty-first century direct references to “colonized” peoples, unless used in an historical context, have become rarer and rarer. Yet the move to retain the system of representation of the west as superior to the non-west becomes bound to a strategy of displacement and substitution. Thus in popular culture a story set far away from the original imperial scene may use metaphor and metonymy to reincorporate visions of colonialism. Let me explain this by referring to Luis Llosa’s movie, *Anaconda*.¹¹ The premise of the film is rather simple. Set possibly in the 1990s, *Anaconda* tells the story of an American film crew traveling up the Amazon in search of a mysterious Indian tribe called the “Shirishama” or “people of the mist.” Along the way the crew rescue a Paraguayan snake catcher/collector, adventurer, and sometime failed priest, Sarone, from a sinking boat. Sarone who becomes aware of the crew’s mission volunteers to lead them to where he had actually last seen the Shirishama. But unknown to the crew, Sarone has an agenda of his own, subsequently hijacking the boat and forcing the crew to accompany him on his selfish quest to hunt down a giant forty-foot anaconda that he could potentially sell in “civilization” for millions of dollars. In a dramatic twist, the

¹¹*Anaconda*, dir. Luis Llosa, with Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube, John Voight, Eric Stolz, and Jonathan Hyde, Sony Pictures Entertainment, 1997.

attempt to capture the snake becomes disastrous as the creature turns out to be something more powerful than Sarone can easily overcome.

At a glance, *Anaconda* neatly falls into the action-adventure genre that has been informed by *King Kong* and the movies in the *Aliens* series where there is an encounter with some unknown entity that the protagonists cannot perfectly control. *Anaconda*, like other movies in its genre is, however, especially ambivalent in its relationship with colonialism because its narrative is so inundated by textual appropriations and an attempt to address moral issues. For example the whole idea of leaving civilization, traveling upriver into a veritable wilderness in search of one mystery and finding another, smacks of the moral self-discovery found in a text like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. But *Anaconda* is an American appropriation of that text in which the search for darkness resolves, in the end, as the rediscovery of the American faith in moralistic observation. At the start of the film, the audience learns of the "noble" purpose of the film crew: they are out to unravel "one of the last great mysteries of the rainforest," and to bring back to the "civilized world" the Shirishama caught on film for the first time. Through the film's narrative, the crew is depicted as laid back, dedicated to their task, but even as there are eccentricities among them, these are eventually reconciled in the end. Their documentary narrator is an uptight and obnoxious Briton who prefers practicing golf swings on the deck of the boat, sipping glasses of wine while listening to classical music, in contrast to the bandana-wearing rap music aficionado we find in the African-American cameraman, Danny. The Briton's token presence on the boat (even if it is a coincidence) compared to the largely American film crew serves to remind that journeys like this are no longer the preserve of British colonial exploration but that it is the US that is now in charge. These character differences are intended to be easily

forgivable because they are enveloped in the larger cause of “peaceful” filmmaking, and are intended to be juxtaposed with the ruthlessness and villainy of Sarone.¹²

As colonial discourse refuses to simply equate darkness with just the subaltern, the metaphorical use of barbarism and incivility are as diffuse as in the *Heart of Darkness*.¹³ In *Anaconda* the dangers of the wilderness appears to be primarily embodied in Sarone and secondarily in the anaconda. But just when the Shirishama would appear innocent of all that darkness, the strategy of colonial discourse operates in privileging the American crew over everything else. One might say that Sarone represented the vices of “old world imperialism” as he sought to plunder and sell the treasures of the wilderness to civilization, or that the anaconda was a beast of nature and that when it killed it could not be held in the same moral space as the humans. But beyond this moral play, the dangers of the wilderness become a dense system of signification that confuses as much as it clarifies. All through the movie the Shirishama remain innocent of the travesties occurring in the story, yet their ambiguous location in nature adheres them to the wilderness that produced Sarone and the snake in the first place. Even throughout the film, the audience is constantly reminded that these natives worshipped giant snakes as much as they feared them. While the narrative might suggest that this is out of ignorance, the conclusion of the film cannot more succinctly expose the triumphalism of peaceful documentary observation over the other actions

¹²The narrative makes the audience dislike two of the film crewmembers. The cowardly narrator Westridge is one of them while the other is the sound technician, Gary, who makes a pact with Sarone when he discovers there is money to be earned from capturing the anaconda. Nonetheless both redeem themselves in the end by risking their own lives to save their colleagues. Noticeably towards the end of Westridge's life he has already grown less cravenly and cowardly, but while he takes over the helm of the boat following the Brazilian pilot's death, he still follows the direction of Danny who instructs the crew on what to do when the boat gets trapped on an embankment. In a moment of emasculation and de-Anglicization Westridge wears his scarf as a bandana, reluctantly submitting to the American's direction and saying, “I hope I'd done my bit.” But as the anaconda slithers towards the crew it is Westridge who distracts the snake's attention, resulting in the loss of his life.

¹³See the discussion in chapter 5.

involved in colonial discovery. As the surviving crewmembers eventually destroy the snake, they successfully discover the Shirishama who sail out of their villages in tiny canoes as if in homage to them. The contrast with the preceding scenes could not be vocal enough. By killing the snake the remaining crew has now taken over as Shirishama's new objects of worship.

The strategy implied in *Anaconda* does not have to be deliberate or calculated but is a subconscious embedding in the culture that produces, giving insight to contemporary anxieties, obsessions, and secret feelings about its relations with different cultures and peoples. This will be further elaborated in the thesis. A movie like *Anaconda* may be good instance of contemporary colonial discourse, but it seems to have little to do with international relations. To some extent IR is already encoded in it because it is through a dense doubling of imperial heritage and contemporary world politics that allows for a recognizable system of meaning or semiotics. By comparing the different nationalities involved, the repining Briton, the resourceful and quick-witted Americans, the suspicious Brazilian pilot, and the deceitful Paraguayan, *Anaconda* provides a commentary on the US perception of cosmopolitanism. Such a commentary weaves in implicit references about national identities, stereotypes, and moral hierarchy about its sense of the international world. Without the colonial inference the notions of travel, search and study of the exotic, and the persistence of primitiveness would be difficult to apprehend. Yet floating underneath this is another system of meaning such as global system of exchange, the vices of the Third World people, and so on. What is important is therefore to investigate the culture that weaves past and contemporary writings about colonialism with a new academic discipline like IR.

Thinking of international relations together with strategies of colonial discourse is admittedly not a new project. Over the last few years there have been a number

interesting books and articles written about the relationship between IR and imperialism. Rajen Harshé writes about twentieth century imperialism from a point of view pertinent to mainstream IR, but attempts to reconsider western power through physical and material illustrations. Africa and the Third World are reassessed through new actions and institutions enacted by the west to create a system of dependence.¹⁴ Sankaran Krishna reviews three postmodernist IR texts and critiques them as unable to go beyond western self-referentiality and argues for a “postcolonial” view of the discipline.¹⁵ These works are undeniably important as we work to unravel the might of colonial discourse but however do not display its profundity. Nonetheless, there are two important works by Phillip Darby that must be mentioned. In his edited volume on *At the Edge of International Relations*, the authors’ implicit objective is to demonstrate various global issues that have been situated at the periphery of the discipline. By drawing from numerous examples from colonial discourse—from the Victorian experiments on African women to Kenyan rebellions and from Thai conceptions of democracy to masculinity in India—the authors seek to demonstrate how narrow IR is.¹⁶ Indeed, borrowing a certain tone from Krishna, Darby stresses on that even postmodernism is inadequate in its colonial consciousness.¹⁷ The other work is Darby’s own book on *The Fiction of Imperialism* in which he demonstrates that “imaginative literature and analysis in international relations do not inhabit different worlds [and]

¹⁴Rajen Harshé, *Twentieth Century Imperialism: Shifting Contours and Changing Conceptions* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997).

¹⁵Sankaran Krishna, “The Importance of Being Ironic: A Postcolonial View of Critical International Relations Theory,” *Alternatives* 18.3 (1993): 385–417.

¹⁶Phillip Darby, ed., *At the Edge of International Relations: Postcolonialism, Gender and Dependency* (London and New York: Pinter, 1997).

¹⁷Phillip Darby, “Postcolonialism,” *At the Edge of International Relations* 17, 29–30.

they overlap and even intertwine.”¹⁸ Through a series of eclectic readings in western colonial literature as well as postcolonial fiction written by Third World writers, the author argues how productive these texts can be in informing the perceptions of how the Third World and the west’s relations with it are constructed by international relations. These two works come closest to the concerns of this thesis and in some cases have parallel interests. This thesis seeks to supplement and extend the way colonial discourse can be implicated in IR by cross-reading a number of texts. However, unlike Darby, I also include readings from cinema, public rhetoric, and American philosophy. Virtually all of these texts are “colonialist” and I do not include alternative postcolonial texts that resist dominant representations of world politics as Darby does. My intention here is chiefly to implicate a number of western IR texts as productive of contemporary imperialism. Furthermore my conception of IR is different. While Darby positions it as a process of exchange thus emphasizing the location of the culture and the Third World in it, I think it in a more textual and disciplinary way. In other words, IR for me is representative strategy than the perceived conduct of international affairs.

Toward Disjunctive Methodologies

What I have described as international relations and colonial discourse are only selective instances that this thesis is interested in. In particular, ambivalence and ambiguities that arise from pointing out certain characteristics of IR or to suggest that colonialism has a more enduring textual legacy foreshadow an approach that lies at the heart of this work. I call this approach disjuncture as opposed to delineation. This separation is important for a number of reasons. In virtually all aspects of western knowledge, things come to be known as real and essential through reification and the

¹⁸Phillip Darby, *The Fiction of Imperialism: Reading Between International Relations and Postcolonialism* (London and Washington: Cassell, 1998) 19.

imposition of boundaries. Hence objects come to be distinct and the process through which they relate to each other can be seen as orderly and rational. For instance the discipline of anthropology is different from biology. But even when these two objects fuse in some way, becoming bio-anthropology, they do not trouble the prior boundaries they are constituted in but instead create new ones, heralding that new field as something unique and distinct from the rest. Therefore for colonialism, imperialism, and international relations, the use of delineated methods may allow for structural comparisons to be made among them but are inadequate in assessing the complex attitudes of imperialism that cannot be rationally accounted for. In this respect questions as to how internal moral tensions are negotiated within imperialism cannot be comprehended through delineated methods because they would merely assume that the tensions cannot exist and that one form of imperialism practiced in one era is different from another.

By using a disjunctive approach, however, one can more easily push the limits of rationality to which delineated methods are restricted. Since imperialism is more deeply embedded in the psychical composition of the western mind, delineation cannot comprehend the oftentimes petulant and whimsical impulses contained in the complex needs of imperialism such as the blatant displays of power, the anxieties about potential decline, the fascination with the exotic, and the condemnation of the barbaric. Moreover, colonialism has become such a longstanding phenomenon that it has penetrated practically every aspect of western knowledge and delineation only serves to further entrench imperialism into that repository of knowledge than to expose it. In this regard disjuncture is both a style of reading one may use to assess the relationship between imperialism and a discipline like IR and also a strategy the west subconsciously invokes in disguising its current forms of cultural production as innocent of the charges of western dominance. It calls for the appreciation of

contingency and incommensurability as more effective strategies of colonial discourse. Let us examine the composition of imperialism. By using delineation there is no recourse to anything outside of a cause-effect relationship. Imperialism is caused by the longing to expand territory. Imperialism is a very male-oriented preoccupation. Colonization was an outward satisfaction of the civilizing mission. All these are assertions that have at times been associated with western power, and in many cases nothing stops them being considered collectively. They are, however, delineated substances. Thinking disjunctively means that the whole project of colonialism cannot be reduced to any single causative. If colonial discourse perceives any feature of western society as gender, sexuality, masculinity, religion, science, Orientalism, philosophy, corporeality, or space as the tropes through which imperialism is legitimized, these features cannot be thought of as each having its own unique effect on empire but that they collaborate in ways specific to the circumstance. For example the attitude of Joseph Conrad is enunciated through the very machismo or masculine call for travel and adventure. Yet the notion of masculinity requires so many other tropes to be effective, for instance, in being contrasted to the more passive and domesticated role of women, in drawing from the missionary zeal of Christianity, and in the use of science as something that allows the west to prevail over the natives.

Subsequently, there are two issues that disjuncture highlights in the context of this work. First, colonialism and imperialism have often been noted to be distinct concepts. Colonialism refers to the process of transplanting settlements in distant lands while imperialism relates to the “practice,” “theory,” and “attitude” that the metropolitan center maintains over its colonial system.¹⁹ In their own delineated sites each concept carries with it extremely complex associations. Colonialism cannot be

¹⁹Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 41–43. The authors adapt part of this definition from Edward Said.

articulated without also thinking about racism and sexism or be divorced from its current incarnation as neo-colonialism or colonization of the subaltern's mind. Likewise, imperialism conveys the burden of western power that weaves in its historical antecedents (such as in the Roman Empire) as well as its different manifestations as in economics, trade, culture, and the military. By thinking of colonialism and imperialism as disjunctive terms, one does not only interrelate them but makes it impossible to separate them. Thus when imperialism is articulated in present times it becomes more and more difficult to extricate the long colonial history that imperialism is implicated in. To this end if it appears that parts of the thesis conflates these two terms, it is with this disjunctive posture in mind.

Second, the notion of imperialism is notoriously difficult to pinpoint and its connection with concepts like power, dominance, and ethnocentrism is ambiguous. Was every exertion of power by the British during the height of its empire or every act of intervention by superpower US imperialist? Is every Eurocentric assertion productive of imperialism? For many social scientists these questions are too laborious to answer and as such they would prefer to dispense with imperialism as a viable category for analysis altogether. This is too convenient for people who study the use of power in the late twentieth century because as power becomes more diffuse and intangible, it would be easy for them to relegate any injustice done to the Third World as caused by something else, some force that is yet to be identified. Disjuncture allows the concept of imperialism to be a more Manichean entity, constituted by a growing repository of associations and techniques of self-denial. Hence the attempt by western modern scholars to separate Eurocentrism from imperialism is unconvincing. These individuals may argue that ethnocentrism exists in every society, so the western sense of superiority and greatness is no different from say, the Chinese belief that they are elevated in a position between heaven and earth. Furthermore, they may stress that

ethnocentrism is a driving force of patriotism, providing societies with the solidarity needed for forging strong national communities. These excuses presume that ethnocentrism is universal and atemporal but because it has already been implicated in conditioning colonial discourse, it is impossible to extricate contemporary expressions of Eurocentrism from any articulation of imperialism, past or present. In this respect the transformation of imperialism from one that is physically evident in the establishment of colonies to one that is psychically constituted by nostalgia and moral reprobation demonstrates the increasing invisibility of western power. Eurocentrism becomes disjunctively a residual aspect of imperialism as well as a clue to the persisting western longing for empire of a different sort.

If disjuncture has its own contradiction or appears to be vague, this would be due to limitations in the present language to come to terms with its obscurantist perspective. In spite of advocating incommensurability, disjuncture still requires being set against "delineation" in order for it to be appreciated and it furthermore resists any definition except for what one may deduce through, for instance, the way this thesis attempts to associate international relations with imperialism. But as argued, disjuncture is extremely productive when these relationships have to be investigated, and in this thesis I ask the following questions. How is it that colonial discourse is capable of weathering the moral transformations that have come with the end of the British Empire and the creation of American hegemony? How is it possible for one to say that American imperialism is very different from the British experience but still connect it with a more persistent western psychical desire? How has a field like IR come to promote these moral changes and be complicit with US imperialism? How is it possible for many IR texts to have no mention at all about what had been classically understood as imperialism but still contribute to the maintenance of empire? By thinking of these questions disjunctively, it soon becomes apparent that the strategies

of colonial discourse they refer to are more than just subconscious or accidental. In effect, it compels one to consider texts as part of colonial discourse even when their connection with imperialism seems unsubstantiated. Furthermore, it reaffirms in colonial discourse that empire is not simply the overt expression of imperial power but also the techniques used in managing its conceptual transformations, the changes in the actors involved, as well as the way historical knowledge and texts are negotiated.

In order to demonstrate the disjuncture between international relations and imperialism, the present work assesses both entities as dependent on each other for the production of contemporary global meanings. While we cannot say with any certainty whether or not the west—typically the United States—will continue in the long run to be successful in keeping its empire, it is possible to deduce a lingering wish for empire. To do so the following chapter (chapter two) lays out, in a more detailed fashion, what is at stake in thinking disjunctively and how one could begin to think about the connections between IR and imperialism. I stress here that delineated ways of thinking about imperialism are not enough because apart from their involution, they do not allow for the full scope of the concept to be properly appreciated. As such, thinking of imperialism as constituted by texts and that these texts are shared with IR shows that present day notions of empire must also consider its cultural dimension. In chapter three I further emphasize IR and imperialism's intertextuality through the trope of otherness and the "economy of desire." These are interesting ideas because early colonial discourse has usually relied on representing the colonized as other or different to the imperial self to justify colonialism. But as we move further into the time of IR such strategies of representation are only part of a larger cultural production, one that is ambivalently split between the reduction of the otherness of the Third World to the same (IR's universalist claims) and the need of retaining the subaltern's difference in some other form. The economy of desire is thus the machinery that is present in

colonial discourse so that these conflicts between self and other can be rendered unproblematic. By reopening this tension this chapter seeks to expose the universalist approach of IR as also containing an implicit prejudice against the Third World.

The direction of the thesis takes a shift with chapters 4, 5, and 6. In these segments my intention is not so much to account for the disjuncture, but to demonstrate how it works in IR to articulate various issues on the moral problems of imperialism, the anxieties of the potential loss of power and coherence, and increasing intellectual consciousness in the social science academy. In particular, chapter 4 examines the historical mission surrounding the anti-imperialist debates in the America of the early twentieth century and reads this against a number of classical realist texts in international relations. They may appear unrelated at first but are disjunctively linked through the way the greatness of the United States is centered and how discussions of imperialism by both the anti-imperialists and classical realists often return to the ambivalence in the perpetuation of American power. While imperialism may be dubbed moral concerns for the US, a reading of the anti-imperialist texts against those of realist IR shows how they are circumvented. These classical realist texts were largely written between the 1960s and early 1980s, and as the political landscape has changed with the end of the cold war, so too must attitudes toward US power. Thus in chapter 5, I examine the anxieties one may expect to find in an empire at its zenith, and I pay attention to the famous Polish-British colonial writer Joseph Conrad and to the political scientist Samuel Huntington. Both authors are notably of different eras, nationalities, and work within dissimilar genres. Yet because they are located at similar junctures in the history of their respective empires, they articulate an ambivalent position that mixes condemnation of selected aspects of imperialism while lauding others. This is not necessarily a rational process but reflects the anxieties about the potential decline of their empires and the heightened sense of nostalgia to restore

their greatness. Finally chapter 6 deals with the more complex subject of postmodernism in western intellectualism and social sciences. I have included this discussion because as imperialism progresses through the decades, it is fairly obvious that there is increasing awareness of its pervasiveness and profoundness. In the context of this thesis such, awareness culminates with postmodernism, arguably one of the most ambivalent cultural and philosophical systems of thought that has its own self-defensive machinery. I stress that while postmodernism may have somewhat informed colonial discourse theory, it stops short of enabling a useful theory of imperialism because it cannot remove itself from the disjuncture of western knowledge. By examining the works of Richard Rorty I stress that the Anglo-American variant of postmodernism incorporates a pragmatism that secretly centralizes Eurocentrism. Extended to IR, postmodernism obfuscates and refuses to take the issue of otherness to any effective direction.

Chapter Two

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE TEXTUALITY OF IMPERIALISM

[T]exts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted.

Edward Said¹

At first glance, the relationship between international relations (IR) and imperialism may be glaringly obvious. Both share the same global and totalistic frame of reference. Both concern themselves with the way power is displaced and exercised across foreign geopolitical spaces, and impress upon the way world structures of domination are established. Both share the same conceptual resilience by being able to bely their own obsolescence and to redirect their overarching concerns right through disruptive events like the so-called end of the cold war or decolonization.

Three contrasting ways of surveying the interconnection between international relations as an academic discipline and imperialism then come readily to mind. First, if IR is presumed to be a value-free, objective, and historically constituted set of methods, practices and procedures in understanding political, social, cultural, and economic transactions across the globe, then imperialism becomes one of IR's objects of study. The phenomenon of empire, territorial and material acquisition, and the conflict among powerful states are summarily expressed through IR's realist

¹Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983) 4.

paradigm and serves as a historical testament for the future conduct of international power. Paul Kennedy's popular *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, his coinage of "imperial overstretch",² and its subsequent adoption by mainstream IR literature is one salient example. Second, in contradistinction to the first, IR is subservient to imperialism in that the scope of the former falls short of the totalistic purview of the latter. In this case, the concerns of imperialism are seen to be so grand in scale that the theoretical interests of IR form only a narrow portion of imperialism. By this reasoning, imperialism is not just about power, acquisition of territory, or the governance of far-flung dominions, but also about moral and cultural suasion. This is something IR has little explanatory or conceptual hold over. Third, culture and imperialism are deemed to be mutually constitutive such that all cultural texts, whether or not they pretend to be aesthetic or scientific, inextricably legitimize the operations of imperialism. In this context, IR is not the objective or value-free analysis of phenomena occurring in the "out there" reality, but is shaped, defined, and given credibility by a set of cultural texts that reflect on its western, gendered, racialized, and class origins. Realist texts such as E.H. Carr's *The Twenty Years Crisis*³ or Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations*⁴ inevitably bear hallmarks of its philosophical forebears and are inserted in a world that is already conditioned

²Kennedy's book was much discussed in US intellectual and policymaking circles in the late 1980s. While the book outwardly masqueraded as survey of why great powers eventually decline, it is especially emblematic of the IR-imperialism relationship. Rooted in the present fear that the US was losing its international wherewithal, it posited a historical revision on past practices of imperialism. In other words, the presentness of IR influencing the past of imperialism through a neologism of the twentieth century: "imperial over-stretch." By this term, Kennedy attempts to assert that US decline is not without precedent as historical evidence shows, empires decline because of being unable to offset increasing imperial commitments against dwindling re-sources. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).

³E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (London: Papermac, 1995 [1946]).

⁴Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

through imperialism to receive them. Thus, IR is one of the many elements that produce and sustain cultural (and by that, political as well) meanings of the world tailored for western hegemony.

These ambiguities in the IR-imperialism relationship are thus reflected by the following questions. Does imperialism become comprehensible or enter our consciousness only through the framework of international relations? Does imperialism precede and transcend such frameworks so that international relations are conversely rendered an instance of it? Or do international relations and imperialism work symbiotically to perpetuate a system of western dominance? The point here is not so much that there are answers to these questions, but that this ambiguousness in itself establishes the basis of the relationship between IR and imperialism and further triggers off issues of precedence, historical progress, conceptual transformations, and scope of representation. In this regard, the concepts of *delineation* and *disjuncture* may be extremely useful in clarifying the IR-imperialism link. On the one hand, delineation refers to the impermeability between different sides of a given boundary and reinforces the separateness of ideas, values, binary oppositions, and conceptions like those between imperialism and decolonization, colonial and postcolonial, colonizer and colonized. On the other hand, disjuncture raises the nuance of things incommensurable, of sides that do not perfectly fit, of seemingly binary categories that do not neatly oppose each other. Taken together delineation and disjuncture are not to be confused with the elision between modernism and postmodernism or the movement from mainstream literary analysis to something inspired by continental philosophy or feminism. Instead both are seen as co-functional and collusive.

Taken separately, IR and imperialism denote different levels of *delineations* and *disjunctures*. Mention imperialism and you would be assaulted by a babble of

delineated voices. “Is imperialism as we understand it marked by continuity or discontinuity?” “What value is there in distinguishing formal empire from informal empire?” “Imperialism, in spite of its contrasting causatives—moralistic, political, strategic—is fundamentally rooted in capitalism.” “There are postcolonial texts just as there are colonial texts.” What especially sustains such voices is the historical event of postwar decolonization as a mobilizing category. In other words, borrowing from Edward Said, all readings of imperialism, regardless of their historical specificity, are always reflective of their “presentness” where one’s present social and cultural conditions determine how the past is to be interpreted.⁵ Hence, postwar decolonization is a form of disjuncture not that it merely separates the “colonial” era from a “post-colonial” one, but through our “presentness” incites contest over the meaning of decolonization and performatively serves as a rallying token for how it could otherwise be constituted. Such a disjuncture in imperialism is not necessarily historically specific. While it may be possible to categorize Conrad, Haggard, and Kipling on one historical side of postwar decolonization, and such writers like Rushdie, Ngugi, and Chinweizu on the other, nothing is there to stop cross-readings of these writers or their deployment to serve political purposes in the present.

Mention international relations, on the other hand, and its disjuncture with imperialism becomes evident. Having been formally instituted as an academic discipline at the end of the first world war, IR straddles both sides of the postwar decolonization delineation without a perfect fusion with the course and trajectory of imperialism. As Jim George notes, the kind of normative international relations that was practiced during the interregnum drew inspiration largely from the liberal theories of Kant and Schumpeter precisely because of the ethical transgressions

⁵Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993) 15–23.

imperialism was deemed to have inflicted on human freedom.⁶ But the kind of IR that emerged was anything but anti-imperialist because it had failed to rid itself of the very cultural and philosophical trappings that were constitutive of imperialism in the first place. Hence, ambivalently, the delineation between prewar and postwar orders gave way to a pre-cold war and cold war international system where the inflection of imperialism served, in an unsystematic way, in organizing and constructing meanings. “Are the actions of the United States imperialist or simply anti-isolationist” or “Is the Soviet Union imperialist” became questions that continually irrupted into the discipline without there being any consistent attempt to comprehend imperialism. Such a disjuncture perhaps leads to various lamentations that as a historical category, imperialism has been omitted from IR.⁷

By raising the delineations and disjunctures in imperialism and IR, my intention is to set the tone for how one might begin to examine the interconnection between the two. Granted that there are many works on imperialism as there are on IR, and that there is no single authoritative view on the constitutive elements of either, how is it possible to study IR and imperialism, or for that matter, IR *as* imperialism? How is it possible to navigate the dense, historical terrain IR and imperialism have traversed? The terms, delineation and disjuncture are thus strategic. I use them deliberately to convey the nature of the debates inherent in IR and imperialism, and to show that the delineated lines of during or after empire, or continuity and discontinuity in imperialism are futile approaches because they do not take into consideration the temporal and positional disjunctures at their core. This chapter then does a number of things. First, it examines a number of traditional

⁶Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994) 75.

⁷Phillip Darby and A.O. Paolini, “Bridging International Relations and Postcolonialism,” *Alternatives* 19.3 (1994): 379.

positions on imperialism and then juxtaposes them to a new range of critical consciousness that oppose them. Then, it recasts imperialism as a practice of textuality and subsequently enlarges its scope by showing how the extent and subject matter of texts culturally convey western dominance. Finally, I suggest what is at stake in reconsidering international relations as an imperial text.

Tensions of Imperialism

It is not a small exaggeration to state that, at the end of the twentieth century, the repertoire of narratives on imperialism has become an eclectic and dissonant mix of academic conjecture, ideological positions, and rhetorical rantings. The basic questions that characterize the mainstream or canonical views of imperialism, like what is imperialism, what constitutes it, what are (or were) its causes and effects, and is it still existing, have become subjected to a wider range of contestation and reinterpretation. Hence, like any other concept, imperialism across time, locations, academic settings, and historical periods, has conveyed different meanings and contexts. First, there is the strict, historically specific, and territorially bound imperialism articulated by conventional historians, human geographers, and political scientists. With such an understanding, there is an immediate reference to particular events based on world social relations framed according to a division between a hegemonic metropolitan centre and a subordinate periphery. Because this conception of imperialism requires various tangible signs such as the imposition of colonial administrative structures, repatriation of colonial acquired funds and mineral resources, the stationing of military outposts, and the enactment of unfair treaties, the actors involved, definition, and physical extent of imperialism are easily quantifiable. In this regard, it recognizes the west European states and Britain, and possibly the

United States as either erstwhile or current imperialist powers. It allows for such a definition of imperialism as Tony Smith's:

Imperialism may be defined as the effective domination by a relatively strong state over a weaker people whom it does not control as it does its home population, or as the effort to secure such domination... [On] a political level, imperialism may be said to exist when a weaker people cannot act with respect to what it regards as fundamental domestic or foreign concerns for fear of foreign reprisals that it believes itself unable to counter... When imperialism manifests itself directly its presence is unambiguous enough: A political authority emanating from a foreign land sets itself up as locally sovereign, claiming the final right to determine and enforce the law over a people recognized as distinct from that of the imperial homeland.⁸

Furthermore, it also made it possible to declare "factually" that by the 1930s, the geographic reach of empire had covered 84.6% of the world's land surface⁹ or that postwar decolonization legalistically ended the era of "high" imperialism. By saying that this historical, geographical, or political view possesses certitude over what constitutes imperialism, it is not my intention to generalize or to ignore the myriad of disagreements subsisting within it. Although there may be a lack of agreement over such aspects as the causes or consequences of imperialism, or whether certain ambiguous actions like Britain's actions in early 20th century China were imperialistic there are still undoubtedly "essences" (in the metaphysical sense) that retain "purity" in the meaning of imperialism. In other words, under this view one can speak about British or French imperial experience that points definitively to a set of historical events.

The second view differs from the first positing that there can neither be a simple closure to nor a universalist or fact-driven history of imperialism. While the first view relies on a tangible political structure like the state, the second derives from

⁸Tony Smith, *The Pattern of Imperialism: the United States, Great Britain, and the Late-Industrializing World Since 1815* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 6.

⁹See D.K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1982) 373.

economically determined processes surrounding Marxist views on production, capital accumulation, class relations, and the consequent forms of exploitation. In this case, the historical events surrounding imperialism are not so much “in themselves” but both demonstrative of the relations of production and the purpose driven nature of bourgeois history. An event like postwar decolonization does not act as a definitive rupture in imperialism’s history, but reaffirms the capitalists’ authority to narrate history without there being a corresponding change in the relations of production. Hence, if imperialism ended with the granting of independence to former colonial territories, this line of thought asks why there has not been any clear-cut resolution to the continued economic and political disparities in the world. It also remains skeptical towards the attainment of modernity and social progress that “the civilizing mission” optimistically proffered. Marxist views of imperialism thrived on this because the social problems after decolonization continued to underlie economically founded core-periphery relations characterized by exploitation, dependency, underdevelopment, and poverty. This is certainly not to say that Marxist theories have been static but have dynamically appropriated recent ideas to account for the phenomenon of post-decolonization imperialism. Hence, even though the writings of J.A. Hobson and Lenin had been shaped specifically by the particular social conditions of the early 20th century, such as foreign economic expansionism as a result of falling profits in Europe or new forms of financing capital, contemporary Marxist writers have endeavoured to incorporate their ideas into current accounts of imperialism.¹⁰ Writers like Immanuel Wallerstein, Paul Baran, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin have established theories of dependency,

¹⁰ J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1938); V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965).

development, and underdevelopment that both retain classical Marxist impressions of imperialism and new social theories responding to contemporary phenomena.¹¹

In an overlapping way the third view conceives of imperialism and its questions of causes and effects as a matter of categories. This view exemplifies the intellectual preference given to organizing thought along categorical lines that include the economic, the political, the strategic, the social, the cultural, the moral, and the religious. While modern linguistic rules do not preclude the use of one category in conjunction with others, there is usually always a necessity to situate a series of statements (like an argument or a thesis) within one category. Thus the categorical nature of imperialism is that which makes the following possible:

The basis for military supremacy was economic. Superior technology meant superior armaments and a capacity to transport armed men to any part of the world. Superior economic organisation made it possible to finance the overhead costs of military forces, and to deploy them to devastating effect. The motives for imperial expansion were also predominantly economic. Some historians now seek to deny this, but the men of the East India Company, the Spanish *Conquistadores*, the investors in South African mines and the slave traders knew very well what they wanted. They wanted to be rich. Colonial empires were exploited ruthlessly for economic gain as sources of cheap material and cheap labour, and as monopolised markets... [A] serious study [of imperialism] must concentrate on more fundamental economic issues.¹²

For [E.M. Winslow, imperialism] remains a political phenomenon which rests on force and he equates it "not merely with organized capitalist imperialism but with the exercise of power by one group of people over another, with the exploiting of the conquered and subjugated..."¹³

The most commonly held and dangerous myth connected with the modern empires is that they were great machines deliberately constructed by Europe to exploit dependent peoples by extracting economic and fiscal profit from them... None denied that it was desirable for wealthy industrial states to help those with primitive economies: but to base their claim to assistance on the premise that they

¹¹ See Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Dynamics of Global Crisis* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1982); Paul A. Baran and P.M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

¹² Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) 2.

¹³ Tom Kemp, *Theories of Imperialism* (London: Dobson, 1967) 155.

were exploited in the past was wrong. The myth of imperial profit-making is false.¹⁴

If Europe benefited economically from other parts of the world by 'exploiting' them, it was because of her immense military and economic preponderance. Empire in the formal sense was merely one form in which this was expressed, and had no colonial empires been created in the nineteenth century Europe would still have taken whatever economic assets she needed and dictated the terms on which she did so.¹⁵

Like the second view of imperialism, the definiteness of what constitutes empire is a lot more oblique, and in this respect, the categories are more than just containers of meaning providing in greater detail a certain aspect of imperialism. Categorization, in effect, conveys varying ethical values that are not always explicit. The concept, "the economic" connotes a set of social relations (which by today's textbook definitions) in the distribution and allocation of value resources may still involve inequity and exploitation. But another concept like, "the military" or "political" is more overdetermined in that the notions of physical violence and repression are invoked in a keener sense. A statement such as: "while the imperial powers used political, and in some cases, military means to subjugate the colonized, post-decolonization imperialism is a lot more economic" attempts to suggest value-wise that conditions are more favourable than before. Likewise, the claim that imperialism is also "moralistic or religious" tries to dampen its pejorative content by incorporating a supposedly more benevolent side of "the civilizing mission" than in the military or economic context. In historicizing the use of such conceptual categories as movement along a spectrum of values, as in Fieldhouse and Smith, one comes perilously close to an attempt at absolving Europe, Britain (and the United States as well) of their imperial guilt. In other words, by saying that imperialism was once formal, politically totalizing, and is now mostly economic and cultural, on the

¹⁴Fieldhouse 380–381.

¹⁵Fieldhouse 391–392.

one hand tries to recognize that there are still limits to the emancipation of the colonized while on the other hand framing imperialism as progress-oriented.

If there were to be any fundamental intransitivity among these views on imperialism, it would have to be the “presentness” on which they are based. Regardless of the periodicity or event-particularity of historians of empire, the counter-history of class consciousness, or the atemporal categorizing of imperialism, all views are anchored to definite, social conditions of the day. While these three views are not so immediately suggestive of this “presentness,” it is the fourth view of imperialism that more neatly epitomizes it. Like many of the recent writings on Marxist theories of dependency and (under)development, this view concerns itself with the phenomenon of imperialism after decolonization. But it pretends to go further by attempting to use world political events after decolonization to recast imperialism as a more enduring form of global social relations rather than just representing a rupture in world history. As a European conference on “Imperialism after Empire” aimed to discuss, it was important to “take a fresh look at the continuation of various forms of imperialist intervention, imperialist influence or imperialist control, formal and informal, after colonial rule had ended, from about 1880 to the present day.”¹⁶ In 1986 Wolfgang Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel published the proceedings of this conference in *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*.¹⁷ While the papers represented a fairly diverse mix of area specialties, history, and political science, there was an underlying and implicit consensus in reformulating the concepts of empire and imperialism as well as the relationship between the two. Although the spirit of the papers was to draw upon increased

¹⁶Wolfgang Mommsen quoted in H.L. Wesseling, “Imperialism and Empire: An Introduction,” *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, eds. Wolfgang Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986) 3–4.

¹⁷Wolfgang Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986).

historical knowledge since decolonization and to find an effective channel between “continuities” and “discontinuities” in imperialism, the papers were paradoxically unable to elevate themselves from the “presentness” of history. Writing under the shadow of American global hegemony, many of the papers found it necessary to tailor explanations of imperialism so that they accounted for US political behaviour that departed markedly from those of European high imperialism. Hence the following redefinition of imperialism used by an essay on United States foreign relations is more context specific than illustrative of a comprehensive way of thinking about imperialism.

[Imperialism is] something more general than just direct colonial rule; it will encompass informal domination as well, including relations of domination within the industrially advanced world. At the same time, it will mean something more specific than mere inequality of power between different nations and the effects of that inequality. Effective control will remain an essential quality for the notion of imperialism.¹⁸

But what is more pronounced in this set of papers is whether or not such a new conception of imperialism could retrospectively be reinserted into history. In this regard, the distinction between formal and informal empire features extensively in the volume, and the originators of these terms, Robinson and Gallagher, were cited very often. Yet the “presentness” of Robinson and Gallagher’s musings were not so much a cause for concern. In their 1953 article, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,”¹⁹ the authors were heavily influenced by the nature of US imperial power at that time. Quite unlike the formalized system of colonial administration, overt intervention, and physical suppression, the United States relied on more tacit, economic means of control. This led them to speculate that empire could also be informal and that the more important phase of British imperialism was not after the late 19th century but

¹⁸Klaus Schwabe, “The Global Role of the United States and its Imperial Consequences, 1898–1973,” *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, eds. Wolfgang Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986) 16.

during the preceding period. In this case, there is an attempt at reconsidering the past exercise of power based on contemporary models.

There are indeed many more examples of narratives on imperialism. But for the present purposes, the four views of empire mentioned here tacitly affirm that since decolonization, any discussion of past or present imperialism has conceived it as moving away from tangible and overt structures of domination. But more than that, these views highlight my notion of delineation in imperialism. That is the measure of difference among these views is framed through visible or “self-evident” boundaries that sharply mark off the other or to allow for a dialectical interplay. For instance, delineation results in the following statements. If imperialism is not defined by *this* then it must be defined by *that*; imperialism has either *ended* or is still *persisting* in other forms; *economic* imperialism is different from *missionary* imperialism; or that *present* experiences of imperialism allow for a fuller interrogation of *past* imperialism. Although these delineated views of imperialism do have some merit, they are self-contained, self-referential, and above all, claim to organize certain knowledge or “facts” of empire that exist externally of one’s consciousness. As such, while they may show possibilities for different inceptions of international relations, they provide little critical insight into how international relations as an academic discipline relates to imperialism.

One important reason for the ineffectiveness of these delineated views in establishing a more productive connection between imperialism and IR is that the true scope and pervasiveness of imperialism has been largely undervalued. If the last canonical view attempts to recast empire as informal control of colonized peoples as well, it is the concept of “formality” and not “control” that becomes the subject of

¹⁹R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” *Economic History Review* 6 (1953): 1–15.

reevaluation. "Control" in this case unwaveringly retains its basic references to physical and political modes of domination, something that the other three views of imperialism have in common. In the late 1970s, a different approach to the concept of imperial control, domination, and the consequences of imperialism on the colonized came from a wholly different channel within the western academy. Deriving in a mixed way from feminism, postmodernism, colonial discourse analysis, and postcolonialism, this approach provides an alternative way to reconsider knowledge, power, culture, consciousness, and the psyche as elements of an intricate web to which human subjectivity is bound. The notions of control and domination are therefore not simply effects of power that are epistemically real or external to the subjects upon which they are applied. Rather, there is a prior system of knowledge, one that is contingent on rather than independent of human consciousness, that discursively produces the terms, conditions, and rules upon which control and domination can have their effect on subjects.

Under such forms of critical scrutiny, imperialism just does not have "surface" effects that go away with decolonization. Even though imperialism is associated with the creation of hybrid societies out of its former colonial territories, and the continuation of western forms of imagination, they are generally not considered inconsistent with decolonization. As Marion O'Callaghan notes, the preoccupation of imperialism has been with the formal structures of territorial control and governance, while being oblivious to much more profound implications it has had in transplanting western forms of imagination and consciousness onto its colonial subjects. As a result, decolonization has often meant the end of formal territorial control instead of an "attitude change" among the colonized.²⁰ Taking this a little

²⁰Marion O'Callaghan, "Continuities in Imagination," *The Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge, and Power*, eds. Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Bikhu Parekh (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1995) 22-24.

further, other writers have sought to rationalize that if imperialism had merely been brute expressions of power and control, it would not have lasted as long as it did or had such an effect on the colonized. Hence, by surveying the disjunctive relationship between colonization and imagination, Nederveen Pieterse and Parekh have underscored three modalities of imperialism. First, colonial rule did not justify itself on the propagation of modernity, instead it sought to create the subliminal conditions that sustained western rule. Second, colonial rule would not have lasted as long as it did unless western values and institutions were “grafted” onto the traditional base. And third, colonial rule did not cause a drastic rupture in precolonial histories of colonized places.²¹ Imperialism is not merely about control now, but also creating the conditions of knowledge for that control.

By reading imperialism critically, therefore, one can appreciate how the colonization of imagination works to bind subjects in both the metropole and the periphery to narratives that legitimize the functioning and consequences of imperialism. Conversely, it also allows for an opposite effect, which is the resistance to these operations of imperialism. The best place to demonstrate the critical reading of imperialism as legitimization would be the concepts of modernity and modernization. Instead of considering it simply as temporal effects of progress that all peoples (regardless of cultural locationing) will inevitably experience, modernity is understood as a typical response to how western man [*sic*] is to locate and order himself in the various realms of nature, language, and the unknown.²² Because of the overwhelming assumption that the natural world was divided between nature and culture, between the observable and the yet-to-be observed, and between fact and

²¹Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Bikhu Parekh, “Shifting Imaginaries: Decolonization, Internal Decolonization, Post-coloniality,” *The Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge, and Power* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1995) 2.

²²See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994 [1970]).

value, modernity immediately invoked an elision between progress and culture. An effect of this on the people in the metropole was thus what Mary Louise Pratt considers as “anti-conquest” where the very systems of observation and representation afforded by modernity proclaimed their “innocence” and benevolence while at the same time asserting European dominance of the periphery.²³ These so-called powers of observation were in no small part responsible for organizing an entire armada of scientific expertise. Something like anthropological or geographical “knowledge” of a “primitive” and “barbaric” non-western world and its inhabitants were not merely objective representations tailored for western consumption, but measures that legitimized the actions of imperialism.²⁴ Tellingly so, the complicity of modernity and imperialism had quite a different effect on the colonized. Apart from conditioning them to accept these “scientific” narratives’ affirmation of their primitiveness, modernity also significantly evacuated much of the colonized peoples’ own sense of the world. In this sense, imperialism did not just involve the colonization of physical territories, it also was the colonization of the periphery’s imagination. Likewise the temporal, negated form of colonization, decolonization, is not merely the removal of formal and physical structures of dominance, but as Satya Mohanty says, is “defined as the process of unlearning historically determined habits of privilege and privation, of ruling and dependency.”²⁵

At this point, there is also a need to briefly mention some of the works of the French intellectual, Michel Foucault. The reason behind this is not so much to

²³Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992) esp. 7.

²⁴See for instance, Edward W. Said, “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” *Critical Inquiry* 15.2 (1989): 205–225 and Trinh T. Minh Ha, *Woman, Native, Other* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989).

²⁵Satya P. Mohanty, “Colonial Legacies, Multicultural Futures: Relativism, Objectivity, and the Challenge of Otherness.” *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* . 110.1 (1995): 110.

provide a single theoretical exposé to the critical readings of imperialism, but to highlight an ironic disjuncture between the pervasiveness of imperialism's effect on the colonized and the possibility for resistance. Foucault has established two critiques of modern thought: the symbiosis of power and knowledge (i.e. power/knowledge) and the oppositional antagonism between power and resistance. In the one instance, Foucault inverts (not reverts) the Baconian assumption that knowledge is power by fusing the two entities together. Unlike the Marxists, where there is a definite unidirectional relationship between the production of bourgeois knowledge through class power, Foucault warns that neither term is reductive as "power and knowledge directly imply one another."²⁶ Such a fusion professes an underlying propensity in imperialism, that there is no easy resolution between imperial power and modern knowledge. If either concept were to be suddenly fused, then the operations and extent of imperialism would become more entrenched and subversive in creating a colonial subjectivity no amount of decolonization is able to resolve. Although coming from a different angle, and one that includes the further occlusion of third world women from colonial discourse, it is the totalizing impact of imperial power/knowledge that results in what Spivak conceives as the speechless and voiceless subaltern.²⁷ In a different vein, Foucault also situates power not as a be all or end all of the human condition, but that it has a counter-effect. In other words, for Foucault, "wherever there is power, there is resistance."²⁸ This may contradict the

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977) 26–28; see also Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper, ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980).

²⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Hemel Hempstead: Hertfordshire, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 66–111.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1978) 95–96.

seeming totality of power to some extent, but then it is the only assurance Foucault can have in avoiding a theory that makes human subjectivity static and immutable. If there were no resistance, in any form, to power, then there can be no changes in the human condition. Applied to imperialism then, resistance (although not necessarily via Foucauldian theory) is the very element that perhaps gives rise to different critical consciousness so vital to any discussion of postcolonialism.

That imperialism is both possessive of a totalizing power that leads to the dilemma of subaltern, and capable of being resisted against is not an unresolvable contradiction. It is contradictory to some extent, but paramount to demonstrating a number of disjunctures that imperialism has in connection with modernity/modernization, power/knowledge/desire, colonization/imagination, and representation/ambivalence. By saying that imperial power has produced a hybrid subjectivity that cannot but mimic the ways of the west, one strategically exemplifies a side of imperialism that the western, mainstream academia has long ignored. It is to point out the poignancy and the plight of the dispossessed, the exiled, and the marginalized, and to expose the very starting position one must take if the true meaning of decolonization were to be sought. But by saying that there are possibilities of resistance against imperial power, then one draws on and begins where the previous understanding of imperialism culminates.

Imperialism and Textuality

If imperialism were to consist both in delineation and disjuncture, and that it is in the latter substance that the relationship between knowledge, domination, and the formation of metropolitan or peripheral subjectivities are most productively exposed, where then can one find testaments to such practices? What artifacts can we appeal to in order to unravel the complicity between imperialism and modernity, imperial

power/knowledge and the colonized's consciousness/imagination? These relationships are far more subliminal than the overt notions of control and domination in a delineated view of imperialism. As such, they require a level of critical scrutiny that is more illustrative of the way systems of meaning are produced and received. While there are many artifacts that allow for this, it is the notion of textuality that best serves my purposes. Textuality, in this sense, is not just the verbal act of transmitting information that is often encoded in writing, but as a useful textbook definition explains, is the practice by which different signs are combined.²⁹ Beyond its pedestrian, everyday use, textuality is a dense system of meaning production that constructs a phatic relationship between receiver/producer and the social, cultural, or political context that grounds any particular text. There are therefore countless perspectives that surround any given text. For example, from the sender to the addressee, from the writer and the narrator, from text as an entity *in itself* to the text that is infinitely open to interpretation and reinterpretation (polysemy), or from the text's narrative as being reliant on other texts (intertextuality). As such, texts can take the form of academic writing or fiction; they could be art forms like painting, theatre, music, and cinema; and they can also be functional such as a building, or household appliance. Even more so, they could be actions we can view from a position (e.g. Two people shaking hands in public).

How is imperialism then encoded as textuality? Let us briefly look at the example of the TV and motion picture series, *Star Trek*.³⁰ To many readers, *Star Trek* is a familiar example of the science fiction genre that depicts the missions of the

²⁹ Tony Thwaites, Lloyd Davis, and Warwick Mules, *Tools for Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (South Melbourne: Macmillan Education, 1994) 67.

³⁰The *Star Trek* series has by now become a gigantic cultural "enterprise" comprising of different television and movie "spin-offs," merchandising, and its cult following. In this chapter, however, I refer specifically to the original TV and movie series with such characters as Kirk, Spock, and Bones McCoy.

United Federation of Planets in interstellar explorations that are occasionally beset upon or thwarted by other(ed) “aliens.” More specifically, the series is about the voyages of the crew on board the *USS Enterprise* and their encounters with “unknown” civilizations and life forms, and also about their Machiavellian cunning in eluding enemy aliens that are usually technologically more advanced and militarily more powerful. Read purely as fiction, *Star Trek* is mere fantasy and fabulation. It is all in good fun. Or is it? Virtually no film critic today will ignore the political and philosophical content of *Star Trek*, and it is no small surprise that analysts point to its many defining characteristics. From its allusions to real world political events, to the social construction of identity and otherness, and to the questioning of human life and frailty, *Star Trek* has invited much speculation about the relationship between its narratives and worldly circumstances. Imperialism stands very much as one crucial aspect, although it appears a lot more oblique, considering the historical period (the 1970s until the present) in which the series is produced. This obliqueness is best evidenced by the misalignment of *Star Trek's* narratives of imperialism, and it is this that exemplifies the textual density of the series. Many viewers will not miss *Star Trek's* references to the 15th or 16th century themes of travel, exploration, and discovery. The *Enterprise* and its crew could be read as metonymically standing for a community possessing the methods and power to travel, to observe, and if need be, to destroy. Historically, Europe comes to mind. In the opening sequence, audiences hear the captain provide a voice over of the theme of the series, and the background, a starscape, serves to displace historical “reality” from science fiction. The continuing mission of the *Enterprise*, the captain announces, is to “seek out new life and new civilizations, to explore strange new worlds,” and to “boldly go where no man has gone before.” This text is easily transposable back into western history’s “age of discovery”, but if the entire ambit of *Star Trek* would be

considered, there is a misalignment in narratives because the series suspiciously appears to miss the control, domination, and violence that came in history's wake. For instance, some viewers may argue that *Star Trek* is opposed to violence because it puts its faith in the "prime directive," a clause that expressly prohibits any member of the Federation from interfering with the history and development of any new primitive civilization encountered. The directive becomes a symbol of opposition to empire and domination.³¹

By a more critical reading, however, this misalignment is a lot more devious not just in preventing a presumed correspondence between fictive and historical texts, but also in disguising the possibilities of reading *Star Trek* against a discursive backdrop that is more politically involving. The misalignment of narratives in *Star Trek*, therefore, is to warn that textual connections are not so much with historical parallels as they are with present mindsets, that specifically, *Star Trek* is an American cultural artifact that conveys a number of standpoints about imperialism. Imperialism with all its accompanying features of violence, colonization, domination, and displacement is in today's ethical terms, considered an aberration of humanity. Yet, subtler but nonetheless rapacious actions of observation and the imparting of civilization and modernity are held more positively. It is as if to say that retrospectively (and especially in the US where there traditionally was supposed to be very strong opposition against colonization but support for "self-determination") some aspects of imperialism were bad but others were good. Then there is also the persistence of nostalgia for or fantasy about establishing formal colonies and imperial

³¹This is to some extent the argument put forward by Thomas Richards. He believes that *Star Trek*, without a doubt, draws heavily on historical experiences of imperial "contact and conflict." Richards is, however, unable to reconcile the moral consciousness in *Star Trek* because of the presence of the "prime directive." This non-interventionist principle is to Richards a reconciliation for the violence in European imperial history. Richards fails to appreciate the continued imposition of western liberal culture, as well as the imperial gaze, that continues to dominate the narratives of *Star Trek*. Thomas Richards, *Star Trek in Myth and Legend* (London: Orion Media, 1997) 10-57.

travel that the US was, comparatively speaking, not a participant of. When reincorporated into the narratives of *Star Trek*, these contemporized features of imperialism illustrate that far from marking a departure from empire, the series was productive of it. *Star Trek* not only exemplified the ambivalence between the brute, physical violence associated with empire and the more “tolerable” practices of imperial observation, but also in allowing for transformations to be made to ethical perspectives without giving up western fantasies of imperialism.³²

Lest the example of *Star Trek* become too obscure in drawing a connection between imperialism and textuality, let me then describe some aspects of texts relevant in this discussion. First, all texts call for the displacement of an interior socio-cultural space, a set of ground realities that allow for the texts to have meaning among its audience. In a sense, texts cannot be in themselves because they not only say something about the contexts that produce them, but also construct those contexts from which they derive. Hence, western texts are constituted by the familiar: family relations, civil society, political ideals, class, gender, scientific knowledge, body consciousness, concepts of right and wrong, and so on. When Anne McClintock declares that gender, class, and production are interconnected with imperialism, and then goes on show their displacement in, for example, artistic representations of America as a woman, or domesticity and the “cleansing” of

³²There are quite a number of arguments one may make on this issue. In particular, the concepts of discovery and exploration far exceed their colonial contexts because their historical setting has become so ingrained onto the consciousness/imagination of the west that even today, cultural texts continue to reflect fantasies about those experiences. Such persistence is evident in many texts, not just in *Star Trek*, as they elucidate an ironic disjuncture between their worldly references and fantastic settings. As Richard Phillips stresses, colonial novels that relied heavily on themes of adventure, discovery, and exploration did not necessarily face extinction when most of earth’s surface was becoming “known” and conquered. Instead, it leapt from the domain of the earthbound to the realm of science fiction. Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 7.

empire in British soap advertisements,³³ she is illustrating this text-context relationship. But more specifically, it is Edward Said who sees such a text-context relationship as a matter of “worldliness.” In Said’s view every text, no matter how divorced it may be from ground reality, forms an inextricable bond with its “social world, human life, and the... historical moments in which [it is] located and interpreted.”³⁴ And far from being politically distant, worldliness bears the hallmark of certain social traits. One of Said’s examples is the movement between filiation and affiliation. Through the loss of the biological family in western society, there has been an underlying desire to retain that structure through surrogation. Affiliatively, it is social institutions, organizations, belief systems, world orders that artificially provide for a “compensatory” family. According to Said, this movement towards affiliation has implications for textual worldliness. First, it is productive of forms of specialization. Second, it produces canonicity by urging for the inclusion of texts that belong to a “family” of western tradition. Third, affiliation leads to the assumption that western humanities represent the “natural and proper” subject for study and that conversely, literary studies ought to exclude texts that do not fall into these categories.³⁵

Another aspect of textuality is that all texts are purveyors of a particular cultural gaze. This repeats the popular dictum that “there is no view from nowhere.” The gaze, in this case, is certainly not casual observation. Instead, it is a potent form of object construction through what Kaplan terms as “looking relations.”³⁶ These

³³Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

³⁴Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* 3.

³⁵Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* 22–24.

³⁶E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).

looking relations are also a form of power relations as they establish the fixed and specific positions from which a given textual object is beheld. As such, the gaze can be considered as a set of rules, system of address, any narrative must observe before it can be accredited with the right to observe its object. The direction of the gaze specifically infers the presence of an active subject as opposed to a passive, lisible object.³⁷ A good example of the gaze and its implications can be seen in *Star Trek*. Quite simply, all viewers know without hesitation that members of the Federation and especially the crew of the *Enterprise* represent the heroes in the series. It is unsurprising then to note that it is from their perspective that the series' narratives are based. Even though scenes may switch from the bridge of the *Enterprise* to show the events on a Klingon ship or on an "alien" planet, there is still a narrative continuity that directs the way the plot unfolds. To some extent, this continuity is elaborated from the particular position of the protagonist, and it is this position that best relates to the gaze *within* each episode or movie. The narrative continuity is only one aspect of the gaze as the series' worldliness invokes another sense of a western cultural gaze that makes the narrative plausible. The protagonists relentlessly epitomize "rectified" virtues of western culture. They are "reformed" imperialists. They are proponents of modernity. They uphold human [*sic*] rationality, as well as ideals of freedom, liberalism, and humanism. On the other side, the aliens (both benign and hostile) are embedded with the mark of difference—incivility, barbarism, irrationality, sensuality, and belligerence—that contravenes the protagonists' virtues. In order for there to be narrative continuity, it is the cultural gaze that forces the contravening position of the aliens to be subsumed by the protagonists. Transposed onto contemporary looking relations, it is possible to evidence the cultural gaze *Star Trek* relies on is grounded on normalized, universalized western values before the other can be observed.

³⁷Kaplan xviii.

For imperialism then, the gaze has number of telling effects especially in the way the dominating and colonizing subject is central to all narratives,³⁸ and the colonized is made a mere object of study. As Kaplan says, “it’s an objectifying gaze, one that refuses mutual gazing, mutual subject-to-subject recognition.”³⁹ Pratt’s concept of “anti-conquest” that I have briefly referred to, is also then an instance of this “imperial gaze.” The whole genre of travel and exploration writing even before the start of formal colonialism, conveys not just a position of observational superiority but also the rhetoric of (dis)possession. In a word, Pratt summarizes the effect of the textual gaze and its effect on its European readership as the conception of the western self as the “monarch of all I see.”⁴⁰ While such instances of the imperial gaze was constituted within the metropole, it did eventually have displacing effects because western narrative rules and address had come to supplant the colonized peoples’ ability of self-representation. This is why it was important to make a distinction above between the sender and addresser of the text. A native of Papua New Guinea may write a particular text on the anthropology of tribal customs in his country. But because anthropology requires methods of observation, analysis, and a language that is derived from a western perspective and position, the actual identity of the sender is not as relevant as the address of the text itself. The sender may be a native of the object of the study, but its gaze may still be inherently western.

Between the worldliness of texts and the gaze inherent in them, it is possible to mention a number of implications in relating imperialism to textuality. First of all, if texts are, as Said says, “worldly,” then they are innately responsible for constituting the world they serve to represent. As texts of imperialism, they legitimize colonialism

³⁸Kaplan 78.

³⁹Kaplan 79.

⁴⁰Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, esp. p. 201.

and the very violence that accompanies the dispensation of imperial power while disciplining the colonial subjectivities in ways receptive of western domination. Therefore, the textuality of imperialism was the representation of non-Europeans as a mark of difference: uncivilized, subhuman, servile, and in so doing cast the imperial project as a form of divine intervention or permitted occupation, and in contemporary terms, can be seen in texts that uphold a certain western gaze. Second, to think of imperialism as largely constituted through textuality is not to ignore the physical acts of violence, displacement, and plunder but to reinscribe them as a system of reading texts whose worldliness has otherwise been lost. Many critics have expressed reservations that thinking in terms of texts often distance one from the ground reality of imperialism, which is physical violence perpetrated by the west.⁴¹ This is certainly true to some extent, but as Boehmer justifies, analyses of imperialism's textuality "[offers] insight into the imperial imagination, [and] the texts of empire give some purchase on the occlusions of human loss which operated in colonial representation."⁴² As such, Boehmer provides the first step in reconsidering textuality as something more than representation. As I have tried to show here, to read empire as a text is not to surrender all contingent actions to the matter of writing. Instead it is to allow for reading of these actions when they have been hidden behind texts. Third, in regarding imperialism as constituted through texts, it is possible to more clearly discern the disjuncture between historical "facts" of empire and the fantasy that surrounds it. Because of the worldliness of imperial texts, there are infinite positions that are productive of it. More than just being indicative of the history that surrounds them, they also reveal the desire or fantasy that provide

⁴¹See McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur," *Europe and its Others*, vol. 1, eds. Francis Barker et al. (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985) 131; Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 20.

⁴²Boehmer 20–21.

different narratives with their form and shape. Therefore, a televisual and cinematic text like *Star Trek* may appear to be removed from reality, but reading it as an imperial text exposes the intersections between its historical specificity and the fantasy to extend these histories albeit in revised ways.

Imperialism and Culture

The concept of textuality as I have alluded to above is widely defined to include something more than just written texts. Using a broader understanding adopted from cultural studies, I have tried to show that textuality is a dense system of social encoding. To think of imperialism as constituted through textuality is, therefore, to assume that there are practices that embed the references to empire, its justifications, its meanings, and its influence on social consciousness into various texts. But if texts are only a medium that represent or signify some aspect of material reality for their readers, then what is the nature of this reality that is represented? If all texts are worldly and perpetuate a specific gaze, then how can we latently grasp these conditions of worldliness or situate the rules and narrative address that underpin the gaze? In other words, what is this discursive environment that makes texts possible? And how do we reconcile the ability of texts to have some swing in producing this environment as well?

In varying ways, social critics have attempted to come to terms with these questions by formulating a number of imaginative ideas. Terms like ideology, patriarchy, discourse, background consensus, habitus, and speech situation have been deployed to demonstrate how politicized textual production is. But perhaps the term that best encompasses these ideas and provides a better sense of the partisan, disjunctive affiliation of texts is the notion of culture, a term that should be more strategic than descriptive. Let us then briefly examine two of Edward Said's books

that interrogate the relationship between culture and text. In *Orientalism*, a 1978 study of western representations of the “orient,” Said tacitly interweaves Michel Foucault’s notions of power/knowledge and the production of discourse with Gramscii’s ideas of hegemony.⁴³ Notwithstanding the incommensurability of the two theorists, Said was able to elucidate a side to imperialism that was hitherto unexplored. It was not simply that there was an in-built cultural mechanism that accounted for the west’s propensity to dominate, but that there were subtle, micro-political strategies afoot to construct an understanding of the Orient in ways amenable to that domination. Writes Said, “[the] relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony... The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be ‘Oriental’ in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it *could be*—that is submitted to being—*made* Oriental.”⁴⁴ While Said devotes the entire book to many textual examples of the purpose-driven nature of Oriental representation, such as geographical writings, anthropological inquisitions, history, and philology, it is the manner by which these texts have a cultural grounding that incites critical reflection. If these texts merely served to represent fragments of reality or fabrication of the Orient, then how can they have such a determining and perpetuating effect on the Occidental readership? To no small extent then, the relationship between Orientalist texts and Occidental culture is for Said located in what has now come to be known as colonial discourse. Deriving in an interrelated way from Foucault and Gramscii, colonial discourse owes its pervasiveness to a communicative attitude that enforces its participants to observe an already-determined relationship between the Europe and its peripheries that is both totalizing

⁴³Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1978).

⁴⁴Said, *Orientalism* 5–6.

and presumed to be “real.” This leads Said to say that the Occidental cultural context is too driven by its preoccupation to construct the “Orient” than it is self-aware of its own intentions. Culture and text are therefore constituted by,

a whole series of ‘interests’ which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power..., power intellectual..., power cultural..., power moral.⁴⁵

While *Orientalism* signified a movement to understand culture and text as inseparable elements of colonial discourse, criticisms mounted against Said on a number of accounts. In particular, his ironic distinctions between a reality that is always socially constructed and a reality that truthfully depicts the image of the Orient, the one-sided nature of his discussion (only from the point of view of the Occidental), and the lack of room in his work for postcolonial resistance.⁴⁶ Since then Said has written a so-called sequel, *Culture and Imperialism*, to rectify some of these deficiencies. Although the underlying relationship between culture and text remains unchanged, the overall project has also become one of subverting these cultural-textual strictures. Said’s objective in *Culture and Imperialism* is to provide a means by which it becomes impossible to think of the west without having its inseparable relationship with imperialism in mind. In other words, the west is constituted by imperialism and all texts emanating from this location, no matter how far removed they may be, are instances of it. Such a position may raise disagreements over how totalistic imperialism is or if one could be overindulgent in the polysemy nature of

⁴⁵Said, *Orientalism* 12.

⁴⁶See Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 126–140. Also see Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London and New York: Verso, 1992) and Dennis Porter “*Orientalism* and its Problems,” *The Politics of Theory*, eds. Francis Barker et al. (Colchester: University of Essex, 1983).

texts. Said sidesteps these issues by introducing the term, “contrapuntal reading.” Borrowing from a polyphonic style in western classical music, Said conceives of the worldly content of texts as multiplicitous, counteracting, and yet not self-subsuming. It follows then that contrapuntal reading involves the reading of an ignored or forgotten worldly referent of a text back into it without necessarily displacing its dominant one. For Said’s concern with imperial worldliness, then, contrapuntal reading is “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.”⁴⁷ It is as Pratt rightly sees, a “reading that consciously tacks back and forth the ‘activated imperial divide.’ Where there is domination, it seeks also the expressions of resistance; it discovers by crossing the divide, both the presence of the imperial referent in the denying metropolitan text and the historical processes that the text has excluded.”⁴⁸ In other words, contrapuntal reading strategically unravels textual practices as culture constituting elements at the heart of imperialism.⁴⁹

What sense of culture do we receive from *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*? Ironically, Said takes the effort of providing two conceptions of it in the latter work. First, culture involves “the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political

⁴⁷Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 59.

⁴⁸Mary Louise Pratt, “Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*: A Symposium,” *Social Text*, vol. 12, no. 3 (Fall 1994) 3.

⁴⁹George Wilson presents a clarified understanding of Said’s concept of contrapuntal reading. While it distills the understanding of the term in certain levels, it finds problematic the narrative density any text possesses and wonders if the attempt to read backwards and forwards between internal/external structures are too “arbitrary and tendentious.” George Wilson, “Edward Said on Contrapuntal Reading,” *Philosophy and Literature*, 18 (1994): 265–273.

realms that often exist in aesthetic forms.”⁵⁰ This Said believes includes the “specialized knowledge” one might find in the western academia. In the second instance, culture “is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society’s reservoir of the best that has been known and thought.”⁵¹ Here, culture becomes more emotionally invested as it implies the construction of identity or invokes political or ideological contest. Yet considering the entire force of Said’s *oeuvre*, he seems to be somewhat disingenuous in arriving at these positions on culture. At least the sense of culture that one gets by reading *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* is a lot more profound than can be contained by these two ideas. Said’s sense of culture seems to be tailored towards a more potent implication of culture *as* imperialism.⁵² The two ideas elaborated do have weightage but must first address the overwhelming power it brings to bear in producing texts and show disjunctively where resistance could be manifested. In other words, Said seems to see culture as a subjectivity-forming element that diverges between the metropole and periphery but converges toward some utilitarian end (eg. legitimizing colonialism). Culture also refers to microstrategies available for resistance. For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, the notion of culture is certainly not the generic reference to culture as the group identity-defining social practices like customs, religions, rites, roles, and linguistic preferences. It is too simplistic, does not allow for textuality to be understood as a constitutive of it, and also fails to allow for culture to be appreciated as something more relational or something proscribed by power. Deriving from Said, a more productive concept of culture teeters between a mechanism that is at once productive of and constituted by texts (sign systems) and a hegemonic colonial

⁵⁰Said, *Culture and Imperialism* xii–xiii.

⁵¹Said, *Culture and Imperialism* xiii–xv.

⁵²See Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) 87–113.

discourse that is also imbibed by resistance. In the concluding section therefore, I demonstrate how this notion of culture, and its affiliation with texts may offer possibilities in examining the imperialism-IR relationship.

International Relations in Imperial Culture and Textuality

In this chapter, while I have mentioned a number of things about imperialism, it is the role of delineation and disjuncture that most appropriately situates the complexities behind its uses, its projects, and its manifestations. Delineation, in this regard, stresses on the differences between methods, periodicity, and forms of accounting for imperialism as a phenomenon involving material relations of dominance and subordination across the globe. Disjuncture, on the other hand, conceives imperialism as a disciplinary project that has far more profound an impact on peoples in both the metropole and the periphery. It is the incommensurable asynchronicity between colonizer and colonized, between imperial power and postcolonialism, and between projects that heuristically essentialize and projects that posit resistance that disjuncture serves to highlight. In other words, in what is currently called, the “decolonized” world, there cannot be a historical rupture marked by “neocolonialism” or simply a world occupied by a different imperial power (the United States) casting an altogether different experience of subjection. Rather, one must begin by inquiring how the very premises of human subjectivity—one’s consciousness, imagination, knowledge, cultural preferences and receptiveness—remain honed to a largely western one, and how resistance towards this could be effected. I also stressed that such impressions of disjuncture are best seen in textual practices and how they constitute imperialism. Because texts are worldly and claim to speak/observe from a position of authority (the gaze), they are testaments that not just encode or represent a desired way of looking at the world, but

also serves to reaffirm and reify it. Finally, texts do not operate alone without some epistemological or some ideological, discursive foundation. Hence, imperial culture, broadly interpreted, was used to imply the deep-seated, subversive preconditioning its producers and consumers must already be located in order for texts to have their effect. In this case, imperial culture also involves the rules, the recognition of possibility and commonsense, the way reality is to be sensed (here modernity is an important aspect of imperial culture), and the mechanisms to prevent their transgression.

What is required now is for international relations to be situated as a disjunctive corollary to imperialism that neither subsumes one category to the other nor compromise its ability to provide an adequate account of imperialism's pervasiveness. Let me then reconsider textuality and culture by revisiting *Star Trek*. In the earlier example, I argued that the misalignment of narratives (narratives of the filmic text that do not form a perfect parallel with historical narratives) in *Star Trek* do not undermine the consistency of the imperial text in the television and film series. Rather, they work powerfully to intertwine and displace a particular historical narrative, a moral position, and certain imperial fantasies with each other. However, to read *Star Trek* as an imperial text was sufficient for the purposes of the argument then. But being produced from the late 1960s onwards, *Star Trek* has also got to be read as an international relations intertext because of its affiliation with the cold war and the corresponding self-construction of a "heroic" American identity.⁵³ Viewing from the dissensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, and their scramble for allies in the Third World, the division of the Universe into Federation space, Klingon space, and the neutral zone in *Star Trek* serves to unwaveringly

⁵³Jutta Weldes, "Going Cultural: *Star Trek*, State Action, and Popular Culture," *Millennium* 28.1 (1999): 117-134.

promote a gaze loyal to American values of freedom, democracy and self-determination. A typical premise of *Star Trek* is the indisputable right to exploration in the name of universal peace, science, progress, and discovery, and this is the logic that sends the crew of the *Enterprise* into the neutral zone. Their many exploits there are often challenged by the Klingons whose bellicose, tyrannical, and uncompromising demeanour compels them to refuse recognition of the *Enterprise's* right to explore. Hence resulting in a tension between the protagonist and antagonist that usually sees the *Enterprise* as triumphant because of the unshakable faith in their values. *Star Trek* is not just a moral play depicting the ascendancy of one set of values over another: it is contextually specific because it extrapolates the conflict between the US and Soviet Union in a moral space that postulates the potential supremacy of modernity and liberal values. So in the early 1990s, in accordance with the triumphalism that followed the end of the cold war, it was the Federation that prevails and the Klingons forced into rapprochement. To quite an extent, the IR intertext is immediately implicated in *Star Trek* because one has to be culturally grounded in the discursive circumstances surrounding the events of the 1970s and 1980s. In order to appreciate *Star Trek*, one must be privy to the way linguistic tokens of the day like Vietnam, bipolarity, the Non-aligned Movement, détente, national security, and interventionism find their way into the filmic text.

However much *Star Trek* can be located in the intertext of international relations, two interesting points stand out to demonstrate that such readings have to be done in conjunction with imperialism. If the *Star Trek* universe were to be divided into four character groupings (each with its own position in the moral hierarchy of the narrative), the crew of the *Enterprise*, their allies in the Federation, “non-aligned” yet-to-be “discovered” civilizations in the neutral zone, and the enemies like the Klingon race, then there would be a perfect consonance with the American division

of the world. For example, writing about United States foreign policy in 1987, Johan Galtung describes the self-construction of America as “God’s own country,” a moral affirmation that led the US to view the world according to four parts.⁵⁴ First, heading this taxonomy was the United States as embodiment of all that was “good,” followed by its allies that abided by its principles of free market economy, Judaism/Christianity, and liberal democracy. The third category was countries at the periphery, which includes the Third World, while the fourth consisted of the “archetypal evil country” that contravened those principles. Such a division can certainly be read through a moralistic IR text, but alone, this fails to consider the broader processes of affiliation that have been part and parcel of imperial practice. Using Edward Said’s distinction between filiation and affiliation, Anne McClintock speculates on the western hierarchical ordering of human societies and the biological worth of each one of them.⁵⁵ It was not an overt strategy as such, ascribing a “family of man” that ranked civilizations according to their skin colour, as it was an innate projection owing to the supercession of the organic family (filiation) by adopted social institutions (affiliation). By projecting the loss of the biological family and a need for replacement, transposing processes of affiliation onto an order of civilizations met this need, while fulfilling imperial desire and racism at the same time. Says McClintock, “the trope of the organic family became invaluable in its capacity to give state and imperial intervention the alibi of nature.”⁵⁶ Likewise, in *Star Trek* there is no clear basis for the kinds division in its universe. While the worldly conditions of the series force one to identify this division with the American

⁵⁴Johan Galtung, “United States Foreign Policy: As Manifest Theology,” IGCC Policy Paper no. 4 (San Diego: University of California Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation, 1987). On the theme of hierarchy in the *Star Trek* universe, see also Weldes 128–129.

⁵⁵McClintock, esp. ch. 6.

⁵⁶McClintock 45.

moral ordering of international political space, it is also past imperial projects of racial-civilization ordering through affiliation that give some meaning to *Star Trek's* narratives.

The other aspect that makes it impossible to separate the imperialist intertext from that of international relations in *Star Trek* is the constant cross-referencing between the two texts. *Star Trek's* allusions to imperialist travel, exploration, and ideological colonization are themes that can be easily discerned, but because the series spans a considerable number of decades it has taken into consideration the changing social and political conditions that inform *Star Trek's* worldliness. Especially at the end of the 1980s and start of the following decade the succeeding TV series, *Star Trek: The Next Generations*, was to be even more sensitive to sexist and racist prejudices that were present in the earlier series while also being mindful of the fragility of the world outside the United States. In the final *Star Trek* movie, *The Undiscovered Country*, one finds extremely compacted nostalgia because the original series had now come to an end and that it had to provide an appropriate transition to *The Next Generation* series.⁵⁷ All this had to be done weaving in the changes in the underlying cultural and political circumstances without necessarily relinquishing the basic premise of limitless interstellar travel and exploration. What makes *The Undiscovered Country* distinctive is, by the screenwriter's admission, the film's attempt to parallel the end of the cold war and to provide a moral lesson to those who feel there is much to lose by its ending. This movie tells the story of the dying Klingon Empire, unable to persist with the arms race with the Federation. The opening sequence depicts a Chernobyl-esque explosion on the moon of Praxis, one of the Klingon's most important energy and mining sources. In a bid to forestall further

⁵⁷*Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, dir. Nicholas Meyer, with William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, et al., Paramount Pictures, 1991.

degeneration, the Klingons led by their Chancellor Gorkon appeal to the Federation for a peace treaty. This effectively allows the movie to become a debate between the Federation hawks—Captain Kirk included—who summarily decides that it is either a ruse or if it was real to “let them die,” and the doves who see this as an historic chance for peace. The crew of the *Enterprise* is subsequently charged with the task of conveying safe passage for the Chancellor through Federation space so that he could come to earth for the peace conference. Along the way, a number of Federation and Klingon officials who would prefer for the enmity to persist between the two sides, collude to derail the peace process. Gorkon is assassinated under the care of the *Enterprise* and Kirk and McCoy are wrongly accused, arrested by Klingons, and convicted for the murder. The *Enterprise* rescues Kirk and McCoy from their life imprisonment on a labour camp, but learn that another peace conference, called by Gorkon’s daughter, Azetbur, was going to be jeopardized by another assassination attempt. The film resolves with the *Enterprise* arriving in time for Kirk to protect the Federation President from an assassin’s phaser.

Lest the imperial text be lost it is the film’s concluding moments that reveal its worldliness. After the assassination attempt, with the culprits safely apprehended, and as the delegates compose themselves, this exchange takes place between Azetbur and Kirk:

Azetbur: What’s happened? What’s the meaning of all this?

Kirk: It’s about the future, madam chancellor. Some people think the future means the end of history. Well, we haven’t run out of history quite yet. Your father called the future the undiscovered country. People can be very frightened of change.

Azetbur: You’ve restored my father’s faith.

Kirk: And you’ve restored my son’s.

The reading one gets out of *The Undiscovered Country* through the IR intertext is undeniably clear. This is that in all attempts at brokering peace, especially at the end of the cold war, there will always be uncertainty together with the presence of

elements, fearful of its portents and equally ready to subvert it. One must therefore rise beyond pre-existing fears to accept the possibility of international peace. But there is also another side to this. Even though the use of the “undiscovered country” as a metaphor for the future appears to be a fleeting, passing comment at the film’s end it is this very notion that prepares for new spatial-temporal confusion that is to be found in *Star Trek’s* succeeding TV and movie series. The epilogue is particularly revealing. As the *Enterprise* is about to leave Camp Khitomer (where the peace conference had presumably come to a successful end) the crew receives orders to return to spacedock where the ship will be decommissioned. In a moment of reluctance Kirk again defies the orders and instructs his helmsman to go towards the “second star to the right and straight onto the morning,” an arbitrary point in space for one last and optimistic exploratory mission. As the film cuts to an external shot of the ship receding into the starscape, Kirk provides his closing monologue:

Captain’s log stardate 9529.1. This is the final cruise of the starship *Enterprise* under my command. This ship and her history will shortly come under the care of another crew. To them and their posterity will we commit our future. They will continue the voyages we have begun, and journey to all the undiscovered countries, boldly going where no man, or no one, has gone before.

Here, two apparently parallel tracks inhabit the film’s narrative. On the one hand, there is the continuing mission of legitimate and physical imperial travel, while on the other hand, a pronounced concern about the future of international peace. Here, the temporal-spatial confusion that arises interestingly weaves post-cold war anxieties with that of imperial travel. It is as if to say that because it is natural and justifiable for (western) man to travel and explore the unknown, the uncertainties of peace, no matter how insurmountable it appears to be, can be overcome by imperial travel.

By once again pointing to the example of *Star Trek*, I attempted to clarify the intertextuality between imperialism and international relations, and to lay the ground for a perspective that makes it impossible to separate the two. In a word,

international relations especially in its academic incarnation has to be understood as imperial practice, just as the presentness of conceiving past and contemporary forms of imperialism must be understood as an expression of IR. If the *Star Trek* series lends itself to demonstrating such a relationship, then there are many other instances in texts claiming to have a more academic function that this can be ascertained. What this calls for then is the understanding that academic IR is just as textual as imperialism is, and that both are located in a western cultural ground where its proliferation exposes the ambivalence between its own sense of particularity and universal pretensions. Therefore, there is a necessity in going beyond the stated objectives of the discipline and to interpolate new readings that expose micro-political strategies of dominance implicit within it. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, although there is definitely no single “discipline” of international relations, there is an overt but tacit affirmation that any incarnation of the discipline must possess certain representative capabilities. In particular, IR must be able to abstract, analyze, survey, or explain political transactions between communities in the world. But the ability to represent the world is never devoid of a pre-existing prejudice, one that forces observers (regardless of their claims of objectivity) to gaze at the world according a framework that derives quintessentially from western philosophy and culture. The dilemma, for example, is that many IR texts do demonstrate self-awareness of their cultural bias: they either resign themselves to a world that is unchangeably western in design⁵⁸ (and therefore amenable to western styles of analysis) or are unable find a position to extricate IR from its cultural grasp.⁵⁹ To observe the world from a position or perspective does not necessarily

⁵⁸See Adam Watson and Hedley Bull, eds., *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

⁵⁹Many works within IR's third debate take this broad position. There are too numerous works in this genre to mention. Good examples are, apart from the ones already referenced are: R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge:

implicate IR with imperialism, but to read it as a form of “anti-conquest” is to connect it to a larger textual tradition that is imperialist. What this means is that there is no innocence behind IR’s disciplinary gaze as it constitutes a world that allows for western dominance, if not by physical then intellectual means.

IR as “anti-conquest” is thus consonant with many of the disjunctive features of imperialism I have described above. First, IR just like imperialism is not only a textual practice that requires a massive system whereby values, morals, and prejudices are encoded, but is also an intertextual performance through which seemingly unrelated texts are actually dependent on each other in the production of social meaning. As Michael Shapiro says, to read IR as a text is “to inquire into the style of its scripting, to reveal the way it has been mediated by historically specific scripts governing the interpretations through which it has emerged.”⁶⁰ This critical stance is certainly not new, as a large amount of work has been produced in the postmodern or poststructural vein to reemphasize IR’s textuality. For instance, in Der Derian and Shapiro’s volume, *International/Intertextual Relations*, much stress has been placed on the cross-associations of IR with such texts as sports, defence manuals, the spy novel, and pseudo-political statements against terrorism.⁶¹ While there is much to be benefited from such readings, there is no clear exegesis on querying the larger imperialism-IR intertext that seems to encompass so much of the

Cambridge University Press, 1993); Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and international Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, eds., special issue on “Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissidence in International Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 34.3 (1994); and Pauline Rosenau, “Once Again into the Fray: International Relations Confronts the Humanities,” *Millennium* 19.1 (1990): 83–110.

⁶⁰Michael J. Shapiro, “Textualizing Global Politics,” *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, eds. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Lexington Books, 1989) 12

⁶¹James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, eds., *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (New York: Lexington Books, 1989).

postmodern “work.” This is where the two concepts of “worldliness” and the “gaze” may be instructive. By saying that IR’s textuality is worldly, one does not only infer the discursive conditions that constitute the text, but also to take into consideration Said’s departure from postmodernism. That is, even if IR’s texts are worldly and open to any number of interpretations, there is a latently real understanding of the world that has been deliberately and manifestly (mis)represented. It is such a starting point in worldliness that allows for some form of resistance to be effected against the imperialism-IR intertext. In a similar manner, by linking IR’s textuality to a particular gaze, it is possible to make the cultural basis of observation more evident and in particular to demonstrate the certitude of superiority inherent in it.

Second, both IR and imperialism’s textuality mediates a cultural ground in varying ways for subjects at both the metropole and the peripheries. If culture is to be understood as a subjectivity-forming element that works differently to bind peoples at the metropole and periphery to a false sense of commonality, then IR as much as imperialism is constitutive of it. Such a culture frames the world as a *déjà la*, a world structure already arrived at, consisting of sovereign states and whose interactions are determined by conflict, cooperation, war, and peace. Accordingly, an IR culture such as this assumes that there is no need for emancipatory action because all the world’s subjectivity is presumably determined by an historical *fait accompli* that can never be undone. Clearly, as Amataro insists, there is a need to investigate the link between international power and culture, and also to inquire if instances of textuality are enough for this task.⁶² Said’s method of contrapuntal reading can therefore be extremely useful in navigating the imperialism-IR intertext in the uncertain waters of culture. As I have demonstrated through the reading of *Star Trek*, both imperialism

⁶² Winifred L. Amataro, “Literature and International Relations: The Question of Culture in the Production of International Power,” *Millennium* 24.1 (1995): 1–25.

and IR must be seen as counterpoints to the dominant narratives of interstellar exploration and travel. As such, the presentness of the textuality of imperialism and IR cannot be read without each other. The important point to note is that *Star Trek's* assignment within a fictive science fiction genre is not a matter for concern. What is vital is that it occupies the same cultural location as imperialism-IR intertexts do. Contrapuntal readings of "factive" or "scholarly" texts of IR are therefore crucial since they can reveal so much more about mechanisms of western dominance.

Finally, reading international relations as imperial culture and text is to expose the ambivalence between a celebratory attitude that is directly attributed to the presumed superiority of western values and its perpetuation as a universal doctrine. Let me conclude this chapter by referring to some textual and cultural questions implicitly raised by Martin Wight's famous essay, "Western Values in International Relations." In his essay, Wight inquires into depth in which "western values" are reflected in diplomacy and international relations.⁶³ As theoretically rich and dense as the essay is, Wight is unsystematic about his explanation of what are western values except to relent that they are mired in plurality or political biases of the day. Yet, he remains unfazed as he takes the essay through (what is now known as) the "English school" of realism or the concept of "international society" and how order and intervention are variously conceived. Wight emerges at the end of the discussion to declare that in creating a "middle ground" between individual "moral necessity" and collective "practical demands," the practice of international morality best encapsulates the spirit of western values.⁶⁴ But what is one to make of the imperialist-IR intertextuality of this essay? Certainly, a number of silences and elisions stand out.

⁶³Martin Wight, "Western Values in International Relations," *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, eds. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966) 89-131.

⁶⁴Wight 120-131.

One can easily point to a forgotten delineation in Wight's project. If he claims to be searching for or recovering "western values" in IR, then there must be a set of values in IR that is either non-western or presumed to be universal. The former is totally ignored as Wight celebrates the "habitual intercourse of independent communities, beginning in the Christendom of western Europe and gradually extending throughout the world."⁶⁵ What is the non-western is succinctly incorporated into this inevitable intercourse and stricken from the ability to speak against these western values. This however is only the basic critique of Wight and a larger question must be addressed. What is Wight looking for in his essay and why is he doing this? The answer is not found within the discourse of IR itself, but must be framed according to imperial practice. This calls for Wight's essay to be read against Ranajit Guha's "Not at Home in Empire." At first glance, one might declare that there is no connection whatsoever between Wight and Guha. Wight is addressing cultural values in a globalized social practice, while Guha is strategically highlighting an irony in the British administration of colonial India.⁶⁶ However, when read contrapuntally, Wight's essay actually depicts a sense of cultural loss. Just as Guha deftly denies that the British ever exercised mastery over their Indian subjects but that they were overwhelmed by a sense of homelessness, displacement, loss, and anxiety, so too is Wight with regard to IR. By the 1960s (when Wight's essay was written), IR had already leapt across the Atlantic and become appropriated by the American academy. So thoroughly was the discipline redesigned according to a positivist methodology that the IR that emerged out of the US pretended to speak about a natural, universal world with no accreditation to its intellectual and cultural forebears. Thus, overwhelmed by his own universalizing tendency in silencing the

⁶⁵Wight 96.

⁶⁶Ranjit Guha, "Not at Home in Empire," *Critical Enquiry* 23.3 (1997): 482-493.

non-western world, Wight, like the British in Guha's essay, has displaced himself from a culturally superior position from which to speak. To search for western values in IR, is for Wight, an admission of his cultural loss and anxiety.⁶⁷

⁶⁷For a discussion on the sense of anxiety and loss in imperial practices and its cross reading with the fear of infantilization and impotence, see McClintock 26–27.

Chapter Three

REPRESENTING OTHERNESS *Locating Colonial Desire in International Relations*

Throughout the history of imperialism, there has never been a static or time-resistant way of describing the relationship between the colonizers and the peoples, lands, and cultures they came to control. To a large extent, such a relationship could be understood as the colonizers' attempt to negotiate questions of sameness and difference under the influence of philosophical understandings about human liberty, modernization, and Christianity on the one hand, and material, strategic, and political considerations on the other. But beyond this the context of sameness/difference in which the colonized was situated fluctuated dramatically across time, colonies, and imperial domains. Were the colonized inherently the same as the colonizers, or were they different? Under what conditions were the colonized considered different? And with what structures of affiliation, symbols, metaphor, and metonym was this difference to consist in? Formulating an answer to these questions is undeniably risky and potentially succumbs to reductionism. Yet these questions did, in one way or another, form part of the debate within policymaking and academic circles at the metropolitan centre. For instance, the debate between Las Casas and Sepulveda in the 16th century revealed the internal tensions in how the colonized were to be represented. This and many of the deliberations that followed took place within severely bracketed terms, and as such the coexistence of sameness

and difference in the colonized remained paradoxically unresolved, and at best, deferred in favour of the expression of an imperial will or desire.

As this chapter attempts to establish, starting with this sameness/difference paradox and noting that there is a recurring will or desire is not necessarily reducing a very complex history into simple phenomenon. In effect, it inclusively redirects the concept of colonial "otherness" as both an enduring feature of the relations between the west and non-west, and as an innately mercurial strategy of imperial dominance. In this regard, there is no better historical epoch than the twentieth century to note this aspect of colonial otherness. In particular, one might ask how the process of otherness continues despite the widespread changes that have taken place after decolonization and the imposition of monolithic global political structures? Or whatever happened to the world that was once teeming with people having different appearances, geographies, and socio-cultural habits could become the international world we inhabit today. Everywhere in the world, the experience is noted to be the same. We are now all sovereign subjects of an anarchic world where military power, competition for scarce resources, and effectiveness of production and communications determine our outlook and ordering in international life. What happened to the particular identities that were so necessary for imperial conquest? What role do they play today?

In a sense, this chapter seeks to contribute to these questions by interrogating the relationship between international relations (IR) and a broad institutionalized field of the earlier colonial disciplines. By this term, I am referring to the academic practice of observation, description, analysis, theorization, and even prediction that was so prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In particular, disciplines like anthropology, ethnography, philology, history, and geography were certainly not the dispassionate and objective practices accorded to them through modernity.

Instead, to use Edward Said's term broadly, they were "Orientalist." While Said had argued that these disciplines were complicit with European desires of conquest and occupation by representing the Orient in ways amenable to the interests of imperialism, these disciplines can be seen as having a larger geographical scope, rationalizing and legitimizing Europe's imperial presence throughout the world. Thus in many ways, sojourners to the non-European lands, armed with western academic methods, brought home with them ever increasing knowledge about the mysteries of the soon-to-be occupied world, set in its strangeness, exoticism, barbarity, and sensuality. Consciously or unconsciously, the repatriated travel writings, novels, academic reports, and other bits of information fed into a complex colonial machinery, one that harboured ambivalently an economy of desire, domination, and civilization.

It is the turn of the twentieth century that presents a number of problems because these disciplines faced a crisis that are associated with a syndrome described by Ali Behdad in *Belated Travelers*. By this time (even by the mid to late nineteenth century), travelers to the Orient had come to encounter a world that was rapidly losing its strangeness and exoticism.¹ While colonial assimilation to some extent started to convert the unfamiliar into the familiar, it was the abundance of writings about the orient that had made it extremely difficult for anything new to be said. For these colonial disciplines, the changing historical circumstances such as the dissolution of the British and French empires and the impossibility of novelty posed a serious challenge. Typically this was the inability to reconcile the desire of retaining the non-western person in his or her exotic, primeval, and native state while lauding the teleological thrust of colonialism. This was the success in transmogrifying the

¹Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994).

colonized lands and their peoples into thriving, developed clones of the modernized, western world. Thus retreating into a form of insularity, many of these colonial disciplines began to retrain the zones of interest. While many of them kept an eye on tribal societies, they fell under a general miasma of political correctness, thereby refocusing their objects of study on the other within themselves, the strangeness and incomprehensiveness of western societies and cultures.

Emerging alongside these disciplinary transformations were newer disciplines seeking to address the perennial, post-decolonization problems of hunger, poverty, and political mismanagement that have become characteristic of the Third World. The result was disciplines such as developmental economics, Third World studies, comparative politics, and area studies. But it is perhaps the arrival of international relations in the early twentieth century that best underscores and elucidates this problem of belatedness and colonial desire. I do not deny that the way traditional colonial disciplines as practiced today are able to provide insight into the continuity of imperialism or the perpetuation of neocolonialism, as social practices in their transformed historical settings are problematic in their own right. But in contrast to IR whose tensions between universalism and particularism underpin complex modes of colonial otherness, colonial disciplines possess a linear gaze between the observer and observed that is too statically unidirectional. For reasons I shall explain later in the chapter, IR possessed an ambivalent structure that allowed for the discipline to be constructed overtly as objective and universal assessments of global life while subversively and inconspicuously retaining a referential system of otherness. By this reasoning, IR represents an imperfect "completion" in the imperial teleology consisting of microscale, strategic vacillations between the world that is an end product of colonial tutelage and the world that will forever be divided between the western self and the non-western other.

For now let me provide a few more justifications as to why IR should be understood as an imperial discipline as contrasted to the traditional colonial disciplines. Having been institutionalized at the end of the first world war, IR was present at the scene of so many epochal developments: the outbreak of the second world war, the dismantling of European colonialism and the emergence of many new nation states, the ascension of the United States as the postwar imperial power *par excellence*, and the onset of the cold war. As such, in the strictest sense, IR did not have to serve in the actual establishment of physical colonies as the colonial disciplines and was partly a product of very different historical circumstances. Nonetheless, despite its emergence at the end of formal empire, IR shares the same discursive space of imperialism that gave rise to the colonial disciplines in the first place. Trapped between a latent desire of imperial domination on the one hand and modernity's teleological thrust towards global oneness on the other, IR exemplifies a new disciplinary practice interweaving imperialism with the creation of the "decolonized" subject. In this respect, it is the persistence of the "imperial unconscious"² in IR that highlights the discipline's complicity with the operations of imperialism. Where such terms of reference as barbarism, incivility, primitiveness, and effeminacy were used characteristically to describe the colonial world, the fragmentation of the international world into anarchy, conflict, belligerence, and militarization leaves little to the imagination. Such descriptions are merely relocations of western disciplinary practices from one register to another without any fundamental alteration to the desire for the other.

At a time when there is an increasing confusion and conflation between the universal and the particular, and between sameness and difference, the placement of

²Laura Chrisman, "The Imperial Unconscious?: Representations of Imperial Discourse," *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 498-516.

IR as an imperial discipline raises disturbing issues especially with regard to the location of the missing signifier, the colonial other. Are the former colonial subjects, as understood by the imperial teleology, brought out of darkness? Or are they still wandering in a landscape marked by the complete destruction of their cultural uniqueness, the subsuming of their identities into a western constructed sense of global uniformity, and yet will never be equal to their western counterparts? In the IR that is presently studied in non-western academic centres, this is surely seen in the lack of symmetry between the physical location and the texts being used. Here, academic syllabi especially in the more theoretical areas of the discipline are virtually dominated by Anglo-American writers; and even if these texts were written by writers outside the west they tend to borrow heavily from the western theoretical canon. This chapter therefore has a number of objectives. If the previous chapter sought to demonstrate that contemporary expressions of both imperialism and international relations could not be thought separately, and that they are textually interwoven, this chapter tries to consolidate this idea. It argues that IR can be considered an imperial discipline because it possesses a fundamental desire for otherness that is split between colonial assimilation and the retention of the non-western subject as permanently different. In other words IR articulates the imperial desire for an objective representation of a "finished" liberal egalitarian world contradicted by the permanent deferral of the non-western subject's arrival on this scene. For the traditional colonial disciplines, such a desire cannot be so aptly expressed because by the turn of the twentieth century their observational linearity that tends towards local and the societal are unable to account for the global consciousness that IR pretends to hold. The central concern of this chapter is therefore not so much to compare IR with the colonial disciplines but to demonstrate how otherness is used to fuel contemporary expressions of western dominance. It is

on this concept that this chapter begins, stressing that examining otherness as a delineated entity may arouse critical consciousness of its presence in any disciplinary practice, but it is through disjuncture that the ambivalence of otherness can best be appreciated.

Representing the Other

The notion of otherness is without doubt a complex philosophical concept. It circulates around a person or a group of people's source of identity, ways of knowing and being, and perceptions of society and culture. But any knowledge of otherness is also historical, cultural, and circumscribed by interplays of power and dominance as much as by fantasy and desire. For this reason, there is no pure or pre-discursive way of coming to terms with otherness without confronting the particularity of this concept. Thus, there is the possibility of expressing the commonplace but fallacious assumption that otherness and its adjunct, difference, pre-exist all forms of knowing and being. This is the assertion that for everyone, at any time and place, certain groups of people, their geographies and socio-cultural habits, are recognized as relationally different. Quite simply, everyone, in varying circumstances, either others someone else or feels that he or she is correspondingly other to that person. Hence in many ways, the other person is marked as different because he or she possesses certain temporal, spatial, or bodily essences that are irreconcilably dissimilar. For example, the other could be another person, of another sex, gender, class, country, race, nationality, ethnicity, spiritual dimension (such as a deity), language, and culture. This list is definitely not exhaustive and if anything alludes to the circumstantial nature of alterity; that the mark of difference that matters or conveys a special significance to a person depends on the occasion. In short, this transcendental view holds that otherness and the tendency to other is common to all because we are

already primordially situated in interactive social domains and are phenomenally guardians of particular identities.

Conceiving otherness as a universal signifier may ultimately be elusive because another view holds that nothing can be ahistorical or acultural because “our” constitution as particular subjects possessing certain identities and knowledge frameworks precedes any experience of alterity. As such, before any theorization can be made about the concept, otherness first confronts this question: did otherness exist before the Enlightenment, before the onset of the imperial age, and outside of western philosophy? To a large extent, the answer to this resides in the negative since any history of a concept is already preconceived in the present. Edward Said’s claim that otherness and its adjunct, difference, possess talismanic properties therefore makes a lot of sense.³ Where their functioning was understood to reaffirm the magisterial centrality of the self and identity, the “magical” or “metaphysical” rediscovery of otherness and difference, so to speak, is “profoundly conditioned by their historical and worldly context.”⁴ As such, any expression of otherness—no matter how straightforward or commonsensical—forms a seamless consonance with the long intellectual lineage that includes continental philosophy (Hegel included), psychology, phenomenology, and anthropology. The point here is not so much that this intellectual tradition was so potent that any notion of otherness spilled over from its disciplinary boundaries and onto everyday language. Rather it is to suggest that both the “secular” and “sacred” language of otherness are interconnected via the all encompassing network of Enlightenment thought and the way modern memory serves as a repository for the ever changing inscription of ethical values and social

³Edward W. Said, “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” *Critical Inquiry* 15.2 (1989): 213.

⁴Said, “Representing the Colonized” 213.

meanings onto otherness. otherness can therefore not be ahistorical because such networks or memory repositories have become so ubiquitously global that it may be impossible to find a pre-Enlightenment perception of the concept.

If any understanding of otherness is always a cultural and historical trope, then how can one begin to examine its relationship with particular formations like imperialism and colonialism? Specifically, by recognizing that all claims about the commonality of otherness are rooted in the Enlightenment, one establishes awareness of preconditioned ideas of alterity masking as universality. But this limits the possibility of a recuperative strategy of exposing and recovering the myriad of identities and marginalized subject positions that have been subsumed into modernity's system of otherness. It is not my intention to offer a solution to this problem. However, by recalling the notions of delineation and disjuncture (introduced in the previous chapter), in their counterpoising scope, it is possible to arrive at a sense of otherness that is both enabling and productive. Both delineation and disjuncture do not pretend to be outside of history or purely descriptive of an existing social cultural order, but are correspondingly critical and strategic. By framing a given social situation as something that is delineated, one calls to attention a relational setting whose divisiveness, fissures, and boundaries have been hidden behind a monolithic schema of sameness, uniformity, and universality. For the project of modernity and its interconnected features of Cartesian rationality and progress, otherness is a delineated entity in accordance to three interrelated contexts. In brief, they are the creation of the sovereign Cartesian subject through the binary pairing of mental and "real world" concepts, the ascendancy of universal and objective facts, and the possibility of mediating these facts between their real world source and subject recipients through systems of representation. According to such a schema, otherness attains an essential property. It no longer resides in its own unique

and diverse state but has to be juxtaposed with certain selves as well as a whole range of binary pairs like identity/difference and subject/object in order for otherness to be meaningful and have a sense of purpose. But what is more egregious is through the presumption of universality otherness becomes purely an entity well within the capability of modern systems of knowledge to represent.

If anything, delineation serves to show that critically it is possible to accentuate the presence of otherness and the myriad of subject positions that constitute it when it has otherwise been subsumed by the universalizing tendencies of modernity. This alone is however not enough because by thinking of otherness as a delineated concept, one reinforces the self–other divide without being able to account for the internal contradictions and inconsistencies that modernity harbours towards alterity. This is where thinking about otherness as disjuncture may prove to be instructive. While delineation merely incites awareness about the separateness or bounded presences in the Enlightenment thought, disjuncture proceeds to demonstrate that what is delineated, hence paradoxical, incommensurate, and contradictory, need not be problematic because it exposes the true ambivalent nature of modern thought. Moreover, disjuncture moves strategically towards the recovery of the other. Let me provide an example. In recent years, there has appeared within the western scene of the humanities and social sciences a critical consciousness about the delineated figure of alterity. Materializing broadly as feminism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism, this consciousness sought to provide a practical channel through which the marginalized and silenced other could be recovered. In part this was due to ethical reconsiderations and cultural transformations in which the western academy was situated, and due to its worldliness such a consciousness straddled between being effectively praxeological and mired in its own cultural grounding. The question it seemed was to what extent was this critical consciousness capable of breaching the

delineated fixture of otherness while being located in a particular cultural context? Could there be any discussion of otherness that did not reinforce the western systems of reference? For some critics, this proves to be difficult. Since modernity tolerates internal dissension and feeds on dialectical contest, the delineated critiques of otherness do not always stand outside of and apart from it. Instead, this awareness of the other is to critics like Homi Bhabha a “limit text”, the anti-western trope that does not provide any effective emancipation.⁵ Even for the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who has been noted for promoting a notion of otherness that defies western rationality,⁶ his refusal to identify any subject position the other could occupy continues to subjugate the identities that have been effaced by modernity. By eradicating the essences of the rational subject such positions inadvertently vanquish otherness and, to many critics, undercut an effective form of identity politics. By thinking of otherness disjunctively, however, it is possible to circumvent some of the problems posed by delineated otherness. Disjuncture does not seek to recover a notion of otherness that is pre-Enlightenment, non-western, or pre-discursive. Rather it begins by recognizing that the ironies inherent in the recovery of the other, such as the presence of the west in such an action, can subsist with basic identities. Thus for the contributors to *Social Postmodernism*, it is a form disjunctive thinking that begins with the fundamental critiques of modern universalism without losing sight of particular identities that form the basis of political action.⁷

⁵See Homi K. Bhabha, “Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism,” *The Politics of Theory*, eds. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, and Diana Loxley (Colchester: University of Essex, 1983) 195. Many other works are available along this line of thought. See also Ziauddin Sardar, *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture* (London and Chicago: Pluto Press, 1998). Also see the arguments in chapter 6.

⁶See for instance, Elizabeth Grosz, “The ‘People of the Book’: Representation and Alterity in Emmanuel Levinas,” *Art and Text* 26 (1987): 32–40.

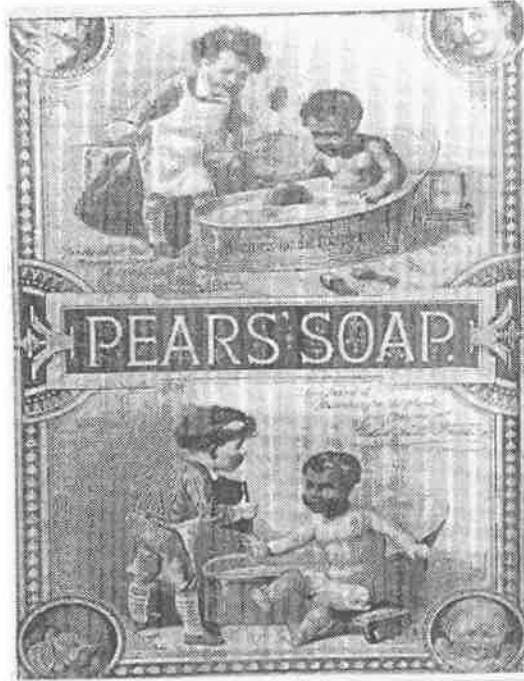
⁷See Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman, eds., *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

This disjunctive categorization and reinsertion of identity politics through otherness unsurprisingly play a vital role in how imperialism and colonialism has come to be reassessed. While earlier academic studies have preferred to concentrate on the physical and formal structures of imperial control, otherness as disjuncture forces one to reconsider the role of power and identity. Because it was no longer possible to extricate the actual physical projection of imperial power from Cartesian rationality, the vast system of scientific and cultural knowledge that was maintained over the colonies was complicit with imperial interest and ideology. A large consequence of this was that knowledge about the people and cultures that imperialism encountered became part of a cosmopolitanism (far from being truthful accounts of world heterogeneity) that was complicit with an ever-growing appetite for expansionism, territorial acquisition, and resource exploitation. The world came immediately made up of strange people, entities, and objects that were essentially different from what the western man was familiar to. In brief, a world of others: other races, other cultures, other languages, other sexualities, and other geographies. But what is even more potent about this form of othering was the presence of an imperial gaze that prevented a reversal of the location of the other on the same terms.

The Ambivalent Economy of Desire

In an exemplary display of the density of colonial practice, Anne McClintock discusses how domestication and tropes of “cleansing” activate a very complex attitude towards the colonial other.⁸ In particular, my attention is drawn to the 19th century Pears’ soap advertisement that features a white child attempting to bathe a

⁸Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), esp. 207–231.



Pears Soap Advertisement
Reproduced from Anne McClintock,
Imperial Leather (1994).

black child.⁹ In two “before and after” scenes, a radical transformation takes place, ostensibly to emphasize the effectiveness of the product. While the before scene shows a somewhat bewildered and dour-looking black child being soaped in the bathtub by a white child, the after scene reveals the end result. The black child is astonished and even elated to discover that his body has successfully turned white, although his visage remains discernibly black. In spite of the exaggerated effectiveness of the product, the white consumer forms a phatic bond with the advertisement because it occurs within a densely cross-layered system of signification. Thus a public memory of many past experiences, values and ethical positions, and the use of metaphor and metonymy intersect and fuse to provide that advertisement with certain meanings. In other words, the scene of (partial) racial change as a consequence of cleansing mobilizes and integrates discrepant ideas to

⁹ McClintock 213.

express a larger and more coherent expression of imperial desire. For instance, this involves the conflation of domestic or household chores with imperial responsibility; the encapsulation of a global political action (imperialism) within a localized economy (the sale of soap within Europe); the presumption that fair complexion is universally valorized; and the expression of a desire to transform the colonial other to the same while also restricting how far this could go.

McClintock discusses the significance of this advertisement in greater detail,¹⁰ but for the purposes here, it is the density of colonial practice, described by the Pears advertisement as penetrating two surface layers of western culture, that needs some attention. First, instead of merely encouraging consumption of a commodity, it reveals a deeper social and psychical will over the black or coloured person. Second, it goes beyond a caricature of a typical scene of colonial encounter by stressing that imperialism is not merely a conscious or deliberate effort to colonize or to dominate the subject peoples. Instead, what this density does is to mobilize an entire gamut of actions, texts, and signs that are unique to that historical epoch. It further demonstrates that the contradictory, ironic, and paradoxical layers of meaning surrounding them work in consonance to produce a form of imperialism that is more in tune with the psyche and lived experiences of the colonizer. In sum, it configures an economy of desire comprising of a system of exchange that cuts across the social realm and the individual to determine how otherness is to be regulated. Tellingly, this system not only regulates the transactions within a repository of collective social knowledge and experiences (capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism, colonialism, empiricism, etc.) but also disperses and recollects the individual psyche into these transactions. Thus, to this point, a number of examples used to elaborate a disjunctive fusion between disparate texts or entities have drawn on the functioning

¹⁰ McClintock 214.

of this economy. In the previous chapter, I tried to argue that imperialism and international relations were intricately interwoven. This is largely due to their location in this economy. Even in an earlier part of this chapter, I emphasized that both the (empirical) quest for laws of nature in the physical sciences and the study of tribal peoples could be read as harbouring views consonant with colonial othering. Again, this is because that economy of desire was present. But if the location of the colonial other were to be more effectively articulated, then it would be the following scenarios that are most outstanding. For instance, how does colonialism enact a will to civilize or modernize its others and yet need to sustain them as essentially different and inferior? How does the colonizer maintain a stereotype of the other that is split between one of revulsion and as an object of fantasy? How can there be a celebrated western canon (in the arts, political philosophy, etc.) that is also readily transmuted as a universal practice? And in particular, how can divergent practices of colonialism by several powers in different places and at different times be understood as having the same overall effect of domination? If the process of otherness were to be found within the complicity between imperialism and international relations, it would certainly be interspersed in these questions. But where does one begin? And is it possible to chart the working of this economy?

Within colonial discourse theory, there are many debates surrounding these questions, each of them positing a different perspective to these questions. Yet to unify these views under an economy of desire would not be to over generalize the complexity of colonial discourse or to reduce these debates to a matter of dialectics. In a disjunctive way, they contribute to a macro-scale understanding of imperial power at its core. This notion of colonial desire has been used in different ways within colonial discourse studies, and it therefore requires some contextual clarification. In most cases the use of colonial desire conjures up Robert Young's

eponymous work, linking sexuality and race to the ambivalent reaction by the west to tropes of hybridity and miscegenation.¹¹ It is difficult to ascertain what theoretical position has informed Young's colonial desire until we have reached the last chapter where the author belatedly introduces Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's re-reading of the Freudian "Oedipus complex" and their invention of the "desiring machine."¹² This is the strongest hint of psychoanalysis to this point but Young's attempt to account for ambivalence in colonial discourse through desire as opposed to fantasy takes a separate track, explaining "the role of capitalism as the determining motor of colonialism, and the material violence involved in the process of decolonization."¹³ Thus desire becomes read as some social force binding the subject to an indeterminable, ceaseless play of flows, crossing between individual and group actions. In a feat of parallel intellectual development, Revathi Krishnaswamy's recent *Effeminism* uses the term colonial desire without any reference to Young's work.¹⁴ This is not a shortcoming as Krishnaswamy's immediate objective is quite different from Young's. In her text, Krishnaswamy argues that the representation of the colonial other through femininity as opposed to the masculinity of the metropolitan center has been assumed to be one of the strategies of colonial discourse. Disagreeing on this point, the author believes that it is the use of effeminate masculinity to represent the other that more appropriately constitutes colonial discourse. However

¹¹Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

¹²Young, *Colonial Desire* 166–174.

¹³ Young, *Colonial Desire* 166.

¹⁴Revathi Krishnaswamy, *Effeminism: The Economy of Colonial Desire* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998). It is by coincidence that the subtitle of this book is similar to the title of this section. I have been using the phrase, "economy of colonial desire" liberally and in various orders in numerous drafts of this chapter before Krishnaswamy's book was published. I decided to retain this phrase in keeping with the intentions of this section.

in substantiating this point, Krishnaswamy's understanding of colonial desire approximates with that of Young's, implicitly stressing on the overdetermination of gender, race, and class and the way they are intricately interconnected. How does such a consonance on colonial desire come about?

I do not intend to directly answer this question except as a result of explaining what I understand by colonial desire. First of all I use desire as a way of understanding the implication of the self in the construction of otherness. This does not refer to the delineated idea that the self can create its identity through the way it sees the other but that it is more fully an intrinsic process involving the psyche. Desire may curiously seem to be associated with individual "wants"¹⁵ but for the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan it has a more complex meaning, linking it to the other who is expected to satisfy that desire. In his conception of the insatiable individual, Lacan keys desire with need and demand, disjunctively linking them through the ways language mediates the Real, imaginary, and symbolic. These concepts will be addressed later, but for now I note that these developmental stages where the subject acquires identity in relation to the needs forming at different stages. For instance the most primal and basic needs become converted to demands when the child develops linguistic ability that it uses as a substitution for the presence of the mother, something it cannot control. Since need and demand cannot form a perfect consonance, desire steps in as something to mediate them. As Sheridan writes:

The human individual sets out with a particular organism, with certain biological needs, which are satisfied by certain objects. What effect does the acquisition of language have on these needs? All speech is demand; it presupposes the Other to whom it is addressed, whose very signifiers it takes over in its formulation. By the same token, that which comes from the Other is treated not so much as a particular satisfaction of a need, but rather as a response to an appeal, a gift, a token of love. There is no adequation between the need and the demand that conveys it; indeed, it is the gap between them that constitutes desire, at once particular like the

¹⁵It is impossible to categorize Lacan's distinction of need, demand, and desire under a general term. As such I use "wants" as matter of collective convenience.

first and absolute like the second. Desire (fundamentally in the singular) is a perpetual effect of symbolic articulation. It is not an appetite: it is essentially excentric and insatiable. That is why Lacan co-ordinates it not with the object that would seem to satisfy it, but with the object that causes it...¹⁶

By placing desire in such deeply embedded and psychical levels it is possible to see the process of othering in larger cultural setting at reflections of the substitution, replacement, and displacement that take place in the individual psyche. To this effect just as otherness does not have to reside within any essential entity—as it shifts from the child's own mirror image, external objects, the symbolic father, and mother—there is nothing to stop its transposition into a realm like the relations between the colonizer and the colonized. More specifically it forces one to perceive of the representation of otherness within colonial discourse as not solely an authoritative and deliberate play of power in which the peoples outside of Europe were neatly set apart and deemed to be distinct and separate from metropolitan culture. Thus it conveys a full range of emotions with which the colonial other must now be observed, love/loathing, attraction/repulsion, and so on.

In the rest of this section I will provide examples from a few writers who have, in one way or another, dealt with the problem of colonial desire and otherness and, by doing so, demonstrate that large-scale historical change has been deeply intertwined with strategies of colonial othering. I stress that in spite of the differences and disagreements among Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Abdul JanMohamed over questions of the location of otherness, its material and literary manifestations, and its pretensions of permanence and flexibility, it is possible to detect some synthesis in their views. That is, colonial otherness vacillates between historical epochs, text and practice, and subject positions. As such, otherness as desire both

¹⁶Alan Sheridan, Translator's Note in Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977) viii.

supercedes while also being foreshadowed by an historical episode like formal colonialism. The earlier colonial disciplines like anthropology, geography, history, and philology are an example of this. If they emerged out of a need to support a specific phase of imperial expansion; typically, to keep the colonizer-self as far apart from the colonial other, then the function of these disciplines could readily be apprehended. They were, in the Foucauldian sense, part of an important power/knowledge connection that continued to produce and reproduce a periphery in ways amenable to imperialism. But with the end of nineteenth century and the gradual diminution of colonialism, the colonial disciplines started to respond to a problematic that seemed to miss the representational strategies of the twentieth century. Here, the self-other divide is no longer so arduously policed even if the people of the former physical colonies of Europe remain interminably locked in a position of marginality and inferiority. There is, instead, a far more dynamic mechanism or economy that regulates how the polarities between self and other swing back and forth. In some cases, as in the more fashionable “global” disciplines like international relations, area and third world studies, and developmental economics, there is a tendency to appeal to a universal sameness. That is, no matter where “we” go, the components and ideas behind these disciplines will vary only marginally since “we” are now all communal subjects experiencing the concerns, dilemmas, and problems on a global scale. Yet, at a much deeper level, there is much reason to remain skeptical over this presumed global oneness. And it is the application of this economy of desire that exposes how, beneath the surface of a (western) delusion of global sameness, is a profound system of otherness that continues to promote a hidden expression of imperial power.

Let me begin first by revisiting Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. Since its publication in the late 1970s, *Orientalism* sustained a number of attacks for its representations of a

monolithic and dominating Occident, its glossing over of postcolonial resistance, its paradigmatic assumptions about power (the assertion of the strong over the weak), and its emphasis on texts rather than on the material transgressions of the west. Even in the previous section, I argued that Said's treatment of colonial disciplines refuses to account for otherness in a globalizing context. Indeed, instead of presenting a more fluctuating or malleable Orientalist discourse, Said accentuates one that is, time-wise, consistent and coherent.¹⁷ Said has undoubtedly moved beyond the methodology of *Orientalism* since, but if this book poses a number of problems, it is also the very same that possesses its own recuperative potential. In short, it sets the pace for how economy of desire may transpire.

In his new epilogue to the 1995 reprinting, Said makes this interesting comment about the internal negotiation within Orientalism when it confronts historical forces:

My objection to what I have called Orientalism is not that it is just the antiquarian study of Oriental languages, societies, and peoples, but that as a system of thought it approaches a heterogeneous, dynamic, and complex human reality from an uncritically essentialist standpoint; this suggests both an enduring Oriental reality and an opposing but no less enduring Western essence, which observes the Orient from afar and... from above. This false position hides historical change. Even more important, from my standpoint, it hides the *interests* of the Orientalist. Those, despite attempts to draw subtle distinctions between Orientalism as an innocent scholarly endeavor and Orientalism as an accomplice to empire, can never unilaterally be detached from the general imperial context that begins its modern global phase with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798.¹⁸

It is important to note that Said does not alter his original stance on Orientalism but redirects our focus on an aspect of his book that is oftentimes not discussed. By juxtaposing the lack of a critical attitude in Orientalism (its continued perpetuation and the inability of Orientalists to recognize its full discursiveness) with a changing historical context, Said demonstrates a characteristic of Orientalism that cannot so

¹⁷Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995 [1978]).

¹⁸Said, *Orientalism* 333–334.

easily be seen as an inadvertent essentialism of the west on his part. Simply put, it is possible to discern a paradox within Said that situates his claims of internal consistency and coherence in Orientalism in a more productive way. For Said, Orientalism, in “a quite constant way, ...depends for its strategy on [a] flexible *positional* superiority.” Temptingly, one feels the urge to remark on the oxymoronic description of Orientalism as “constantly flexible.” But there is indeed a purpose to this, and if Said refuses to see the Orientalist project as a static and ahistorical formation, it would be evident in the numerous ideas that spin off from this paradox. Consequently, Said worries about how Orientalism retains its unwavering gaze over a number of centuries, and in particular, its period of “crisis” beginning in the twentieth century.¹⁹ Because the Orient had undergone transformation so substantial as to disrupt the credibility of its representational methods in the west, there was a necessity to reevaluate how Orientalism was to continue. In other words, if there had been a profusion of different academic disciplines in the west plus nationalism and sustained modernization in the Orient, what would happen to Orientalism?

Theoretically, Said negotiates this by using Gramscii’s concept of hegemony in shifting the exercise of power from one that was brusque, overt, and physical to one that was consensual, thereby laying a more “hidden” will over the Orient.²⁰ But more concretely, Said formulates a crucial distinction between a latent and a manifest form of Orientalism. Where latent Orientalism forms “an almost unconscious positivity” in certain elemental “truths” about the Oriental peoples, their habits, and society, manifest Orientalism is where the greatest amount of knowledge change takes place.²¹ For Said, this latent/manifest integration allows for the tension and

¹⁹Said, *Orientalism* 92–110.

²⁰Said, *Orientalism* 6–7.

²¹Said, *Orientalism* 206.

contradictions in twentieth century Orientalism to be flip sides in an operative economy. For instance, in response to the crisis of Orientalism, Said shows how latent and manifest Orientalism works together. There is no fundamental shift in the “backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality” imparted by the Orientalists on the Oriental,²² but alongside came the general philosophical theories and social sciences in which the Orientalists were eager to embed their observations of the Orient. At a juncture where there was an increasing call for the social sciences to be added into the study of the Orient, there was a curious admixture between a position that grudgingly accepted newer academic practices and an ambivalent reservation that the Orient remained timeless and resistant to these practices. However much the Orient has changed, the Orientalist remains adamant that only by getting back to the essential roots, like the centrality of Islam, can the true nature of the Orient be understood. Citing the Orientalist, H.A.R. Gibb, Said has this to say about Orientalism’s supposed transmutation as Area Studies:

What we now need, said Gibb, is the traditional Orientalist *plus* a good social scientist working together: between them the two will do “interdisciplinary” work. Yet the traditional Orientalist will not bring outdated knowledge to bear on the Orient; no, his expertise will serve to remind his uninitiated colleagues in area studies that “to apply psychology and mechanics of Western political institutions to Asian or Arab situations is pure Walt Disney.”²³

If Said provides his readers with a model of an “economy that makes Orientalism a coherent subject matter,”²⁴ it detracts from the criticism that Said holds a view of western representation practices that is too monolithic and unchanging. In a word, this economy demonstrates Orientalism’s worldliness. But in the attempt to convey an Orientalism that is “constantly flexible”; that is, it strategically fluctuates

²²Said, *Orientalism* 206–207.

²³H.A.R. Gibb quoted in Said, *Orientalism* 106–107.

²⁴Said, *Orientalism* 202.

in accordance to historical circumstances without losing its internal consistency, Said at best presents a model that is only rudimentary. Even the references to latent and manifest Orientalism are, by large, instances of complex western representational practices that remain unaccounted for. This is where the works of Homi Bhabha may prove to be instructive. Where Said's theoretical understanding derives from the "power/knowledge" perspective of Michel Foucault and the concepts of hegemony by Antonio Gramsci, Bhabha introduces the field of psychoanalysis into colonial discourse theory. By appropriating the theories of Jacques Lacan, and in particular his revisioning of Freudian principles, Bhabha is capable of elevating the understanding of this economy to greater heights. In this regard, Said's ideas about projects of otherness, like Orientalism, are based upon a collective social experience. Hence, any shift, contradiction, or paradox within that project can only be perceived as the result of some intransitivity in the way decisions are made and actions are taken at the group or social level. Bhabha positively sees this as restricted²⁵ and, in contradistinction, appeals to the psychological depth of the (western) individual as offering more insight to not just the coexistence but the co-functioning of such ambivalence in colonial discourse.

Note the use of "ambivalence" here. Because the individual is always subjected to numerous forces constituting his [*sic*]²⁶ identity, (sub)consciousness, and needs, ambivalence has a distinct connotation. If the subject's relationship with his other is always constituted by desire, then ambivalence is the foundational principle on which

²⁵See Bhabha, "Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," 200. Also Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question...: Homi K. Bhabha Reconsiders the Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," *Screen* 24.6 (1983): 24–25.

²⁶Psychoanalytic theory is particularly gendered, and to use a generic set of pronouns like "his" or "hers" would be to universalize a theory that has particularly been informed by a masculine bias. The use of "his" is in accordance to the pronoun used by many works of psychoanalytic theory.

an individual's being negotiates the need for the other that must also always remain apart and different. In Bhabha's theory, ambivalence traces the paradoxes of colonial discourse back to this basic "fantasy of origin and identity."²⁷ For example, it takes the stereotype of the colonized as contested by two opposing positions; the stereotype as a fixed, unchanging aspect of colonial knowledge versus its placing as "disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition," and locates it as a form of fetishism.²⁸ As Bhabha says

The fetish or stereotype gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it. This conflict of pleasure/unpleasure, mastery/defence, knowledge/disavowal, absence/presence, has fundamental significance for colonial discourse. For the scene of fetishism is also the scene of the reactivation and repetition of primal fantasy—the subject's desire for a pure origin that is always threatened by its division, for the subject must be gendered to be engendered, to be spoken.²⁹

Let me try to explain this. For the subject, the fetish consists in the desire to return to a point of origin or purity that is untainted by its fluctuating social context. Such an origin is found in the subject's initial onset of castration anxiety and awareness of sexual difference. The origin is thus an attempt to compensate for the discovery of the mother's lack. But before the colonial scene is appropriated as a substitute for this anxiety and difference, there is one important manifestation of the psyche that must be elaborated. In order for the "vacillation" between the "wholeness" of the subject and the "similarity" (but not identicalness) of the other to be appreciated, one needs to recognize how these psychical functions embed themselves in metaphor and metonymy. For Bhabha metaphor and metonymy are not just deliberate or conscious substitutions where one object alludes to or stands in for another to achieve a rational

²⁷Bhabha, "The Other Question" 19.

²⁸Bhabha, "The Other Question" 18.

²⁹Bhabha, "The Other Question" 27.

or stylistic purpose. Instead they function in a more profound way to expose a deep psychical need.³⁰ The metaphoric process, on the one hand, becomes a means by which absence and difference are masked, and the “narcissistic object choice” is established.³¹ On the other hand, metonymy constantly reminds the subject of the lack and is linked to the aggressive phase of the imaginary.³² Bhabha sees this strategic functioning of metaphor and metonymy as entities that mediate between the individual psychical needs and material situations lying on the “outside.” In short, the encounter with the colonial other traces and becomes coterminous with western desire.

In reading Said’s *Orientalism*, Bhabha produces a theory about the economy of desire that is more productive and developed. In particular, Bhabha already finds traces of such an economy in Said (as I have discussed above) and highlights an implicit ambivalence in his text:

What gives the immense number of encounter [between East and West] some unity, however, is the vacillation I was speaking about earlier. Something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar... The Orient at large, therefore, vacillates between the West’s contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in—or fear of—novelty.³³

To say that we can locate the source of this ambivalence of colonial otherness in one’s inner psychical trappings is all very well. But if Bhabha uses a western psychoanalytical method—however much ironic and removed he may be from its

³⁰ For instance Freud has referred to women as the “dark continent.” One may stress that he used such a metaphor to overdetermine the mysteriousness of women. Since the “dark continent” conjures the exploration and exotic nature of undiscovered Africa, by juxtaposing women to all these nuances of colonialism Freud associates women with the semiotic system recognized during his time. Whether or not Freud can be seen as having rational control over such a statement is another matter since the use of such a metaphor is deeply entrenched in the anxieties surrounding sexual difference, and in particular exposes the desire in how women as the other poses that vacillating and insatiable process of substitution.

³¹Bhabha, “The Other Question” 29.

³²Bhabha, “Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism” 202–203.

³³Said, *Orientalism* 58–59 quoted in Bhabha, “The Other Question” 25–26.

position of authority—further contextualizing of the economy of desire is needed. Otherwise stated, Bhabha maintains some critical distance from theories about the psyche, because he does not seek to provide a conclusive argument about what *causes* ambivalence in/and otherness *per se*. Rather, by relocating a larger social phenomenon as an expression of an internal, individual, and subconscious desire, he provides a platform on which the western imperial gaze and the will to dominate over the colonized are, in effect, constituted by a minutiae of psychical problems that are fragmentary and divisive. Although Bhabha is seldom explicit about his own intellectual projects, by cross reading a number of articles like “Of Mimicry and Man” with “The Other Question” it is possible to arrive at a crucial understanding about the economy of this desire. One does not so much as “account for” or “explain” why the economy is in place but to strategically demonstrate the possible sites for postcolonial resistance. There are therefore two Bhabhas; one employs psychoanalytic theories to destabilize the presumed integrity of colonialism, while the other exposes an image of the colonized that is subversively different from that which is anticipated by the colonizer. Between these two positions, Bhabha presents an economy of desire that is dissonant and disjunctive. One side of this perceives the colonizer as haunted by a psychical interior that is never stable, as something that is relentlessly given to a desire for the other that can (and must) never be fulfilled. This results in a narcissism/self-hate divide that manifests itself in colonial discourse as love/hate and sameness/difference ambivalence toward the other.³⁴ The other side of Bhabha’s economy stresses on the image of the colonized as something more, something always in “excess” of what the western psyche expects of its other.³⁵ In

³⁴Bhabha, “The Other Question,” esp. 28–29, 32–33.

³⁵Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 86.

this sense, otherness is always utilitarian because, for the colonizer, it creates the mirror image upon which the western subject completes its self-ness or wholeness. But instead of being the perfect reproduction of western man, the other returns only a mimicked image, one that is fragmentary and split between many different cultures.³⁶ The colonized thus possesses the potential in inflicting a sense of anxiety on the colonized by interdicting a desired returned image, and by so doing conduct a “psychological guerilla warfare.”³⁷ This side of the economy places the colonized as, in Bhabha’s words, “almost the same, but not quite,” “almost the same but not white.”³⁸

As insightful as Bhabha’s conception of colonial desire may be, there are a number of shortcomings that need to be mentioned. Notwithstanding an uncommitted use of psychoanalysis as an ironic counter-critique of colonialism, Bhabha’s economy somewhat understates the full material effects of imperial dominance and inadvertently absolves the colonizer for the violence and displacement that has occurred as a consequence. If colonialism, its conflicting modes of dominance and desire, sameness and difference, were to be instances of a necessary psychological extrojection, then one arrives at a conception of colonialism that seems to be more innocent and less rapacious. It is as if to say that imperialism and colonialism were never fully within the western person’s conscious control. Even the colonial other’s response to the colonizer is trivialized because Bhabha appears uncertain if the psychological effects the colonized has on the colonizer is an intentional

³⁶Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man” 90.

³⁷Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 1997) 130.

³⁸Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man” 86, 89.



or conscious form of resistance, or if it is simply an accidental and passive condition.

As Moore-Gilbert claims:

If the resistance inscribed in mimicry is unconscious for the colonized, however, ...it cannot function for the colonized as the grounds on which to construct a considered counter-discourse, let alone as a means of mobilizing a strategic programme of material and 'public' forms of political action from within the oppressed culture.³⁹

What this calls for is another aspect of the economy of desire that is more aware of the material consequences of colonialism, its conscious application while retaining the critical edge psychoanalysis proffers for Bhabha's theories. Writing at about the same part of the 1980s that saw the emergence of Bhabha's seminal works, Abdul JanMohamed was unsurprisingly preoccupied with similar questions about colonial discourse. Like Bhabha, JanMohamed was influenced by the French school of psychoanalysis and the critical possibilities it had to offer. But in combination with his Marxist leanings (especially in his earlier works), JanMohamed's understanding of the economy of desire is somewhat different from Bhabha's. For JanMohamed, the material impact of imperialism takes a central role, as does his attempt to foreground the conscious actions made in colonialism. In this respect, JanMohamed sees Bhabha's theories as "bracketed" because ambivalence implies a colonial authority that is "genuinely and innocently *confused*, unable to choose between two equally valid meanings and representations."⁴⁰ The fluctuations between domination/desire, sameness/difference, and universalism/particularism in colonialism become not just an aspect of a psychical will but also a very material and systematic facet of western domination. In this connection, JanMohamed pushes beyond such imputations of colonial naivete by recasting ambivalence as a product of

³⁹Moore-Gilbert 133.

⁴⁰Abdul R. JanMohamed, "The Economy of the Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986) 79.

a highly efficient “exchange mechanism” that consists in metonymic displacements.⁴¹ He calls this the manichean allegory:

We can better understand colonialist discourse... through an analysis that maps its ideological function in relation to actual imperialist practices. Such an examination reveals that any evident “ambivalence” is in fact a product of deliberate, if at times subconscious, imperialist duplicity, operating very efficiently through the economy of its central trope, the manichean allegory. The economy, in turn, is based on a transformation of racial difference into moral and even metaphysical difference. Though the phenomenological origins of this metonymic transformation may lie in the “neutral” perception of physical difference (skin color, physical features, and such), its allegorical extensions come to dominate every facet of imperialist mentality.⁴²

According to the manichean allegory, imperialism is first and foremost an expression of western will and resolve over subject peoples and territories that enacts an overarching strategy of western rule. Hence the most overt practices of domination like colonialism, racism, slavery, population displacement, and exploitation work in tandem with the seemingly most benign forms of academic and literary representations. But how do these different forms of material and discursive imperial strategies work together? Although JanMohamed is silent about his theoretical sources, perhaps with the exception of Lacanian psychoanalysis, his earlier Marxist influence sheds some light into certain delineated necessities in the manichean allegory. Imperialism is implanted onto a particular history that follows a linear sequence of events and causes a temporal split within colonialism. Thus, there appears to be an originating foundation of imperialism, capitalism, on which other consequences are anchored (e.g. racial difference), as well as a distinctively dominant/material phase in colonialism that precedes its hegemonic/discursive one.⁴³ Alone, a strictly Marxian connection is not enough as JanMohamed relates

⁴¹JanMohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory” 87. See also 83.

⁴²JanMohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory” 80.

⁴³See JanMohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory” 80–81.

elsewhere that it is actually Ernesto Laclau's concept of "antagonism" that he wishes to exemplify in the manichean allegory; in this case, antagonism refers to the way group identities are the product of inter-group oppositions.⁴⁴ It must be stressed that the point here is not so much to speculate over JanMohamed's theoretical sources but to come to some understanding about the manichean allegory. If JanMohamed's economy bears traces of the Marx-Laclau-Lacan triumvirate then the tension between delineation and disjuncture (that I have been using) stands to be altered. Central to the manichean allegory are oppositional categories and subject positions like "white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and other, subject and object."⁴⁵ While colonial discourse generally demonstrates how the colonizer fixes himself and the colonized onto different sides of the oppositions, JanMohamed uses the manichean allegory to show that such oppositions are, in effect, interchangeable. Thus, in a wide array of representational practices (JanMohamed uses colonial literature), the colonial other is never fixed but vacillates from one form of essentialism to another, and always in accordance to the whims of imperial power.

As such, even when one cultural gap between the colonizer and the colonized narrows, there is usually another channel for the colonizer to turn to retain the other as essentially different. But for now, this form of disjuncture is questionable because while it amplifies the discursive aspects of colonial othering, it seems to eclipse the material problems that so concern JanMohamed. How is it that the exchange mechanism within these oppositions can also eventuate at the physical and material level of colonialism? And how does the use of delineation in the manichean allegory

⁴⁴Abdul R. JanMohamed, interview in "Theory, Practice and the Intellectual: A Conversation with Abdul R. JanMohamed," by S.X. Goudie, *Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 2 (1997): n. pag., online, <http://www.social.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/issue2/Goudie.htm>.

⁴⁵JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" 82.

also become disjunctive? This is where JanMohamed's Marxist-Lacanian connection comes in promoting a zone of thought where the material is inseparable from the discursive. The Marxian side to this economy relocates representational practices as part and parcel of a physical exploitation of colonized territories. In a word, the colonial other becomes commodified in a way that he [*sic*] is made generic and interchangeable with any other colonized person and is "reduced to his exchange-value in the colonialist signifying system."⁴⁶ But if JanMohamed's essay delves heavily on a subject matter—colonialist literature—that is usually more amenable to discursive forms of analysis, then the material effects surrounding it are in danger of being lost. Hence, the Lacanian side to this economy is important because by conceiving literature as either "imaginary" or "symbolic", it becomes possible in creating a position where the material and the discursive become fused and intertwined.

Let me discuss briefly JanMohamed's distinction between "imaginary" and "symbolic" literatures, because this is where his manichean economy is most comprehensively elaborated. JanMohamed takes these concepts from Lacanian psychoanalysis and, like Bhabha, uses them to "map" the broader operations of colonialism. Where the imaginary for Lacan is noted to be a pre-linguistic phase of the "mirror stage" that is marked by aggressivity and a complex self-identification process through the other,⁴⁷ JanMohamed stresses that imaginary texts are similarly "structured by objectification and aggression."⁴⁸ Since the pre-lingual child can never reconcile its need for a reflective surface (such as a mirror or another person), on

⁴⁶JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" 83.

⁴⁷Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as a Performative Function of the 'I,'" *Écrits: A Selection*, ed. and trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), esp. 2–4.

⁴⁸JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" 84.

which it invests its being, with the fact that this imaginary remains always apart and different, an internal conflict emerges. For JanMohamed, this psychical property, which surfaces at the level of colonial literature as the European man's "internal rivalry," becomes instrumental in his treatment of the colonial other. Lacking the ability to fully set the other from the western self, imaginary texts become self-referential as they show the manichean allegory in function.⁴⁹ As for symbolic texts, JanMohamed uses Lacan's conception of a lingual phase where subjects now have access to a language that partially mediates and alienates their desire even though the imaginary is never entirely superceded. Such an understanding subsequently allows JanMohamed to formulate a literary order further comprising of two sets of texts; one of which co-functions with imaginary texts while the other remains self-reflexive in avoiding the manichean allegory.⁵⁰ It is the former set, the symbolic that colludes with the imaginary, that effectively characterizes JanMohamed's economy. For imaginary texts, the displays of othering are in full view as they work by eternally confining the colonized in a series of interchangeable as well as inferiorized subject positions. But some symbolic texts are more subversive in that their writers maintain a consciousness about the irreconcilable alterity of the colonized without being able to stand outside of their own culture. As a consequence, the text becomes split between an emotive level, which confines the other to manichean allegory, and a cognitive level where the other is perceived to be a cultural representation problem. Although JanMohamed does not provide much comment on this except to discuss how novels like Forster's *A Passage to India* and Kipling's *Kim* exemplify this, a reference is made to Anthony Wilden's correlation between the imaginary and the symbolic. This refers to the relationship between the two as being "simultaneously

⁴⁹JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" 84.

⁵⁰JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" 85.

diachronic (developmental) and synchronic (structural).” Lacan’s “mirror stage” is not a singular or periodic aspect of the psyche but must be perceived in three ways:

backwards—as a symptom of or a substitute for a much more primordial identification; forwards—as a phase in development; and timelessly—as a relationship best formulated in algorithmic terms. The subject’s ‘fixation’ on (or in) the Imaginary is a matter of degree.⁵¹

We can therefore appreciate JanMohamed’s perspective when he uses the example of *A Passage to India*. Here, the author experiences a need to sidestep racial consciousness and the identity problems they pose by reaffirming the difference between the British colonizer and the native Indian. In order to avoid converting the other into a “metaphysical fact,” JanMohamed believes Forster has only one alternative, that is, to place both groups into a setting of antagonism. The two characters who represent either groups, Fielding and Aziz, reach a stage in their relationship that can no longer be reconciled. Friendship is no longer possible because this would mean subservience on the part of either. The result is the creation of an India, or more precisely, an Indian person, who becomes antithetical to the west but still other. As JanMohamed says, “the narrative decision to turn India into a metaphysical protagonist inherently antithetical to western liberal humanism probably stems from a sense of larger cultural differences, the machinery of which is similar to that of the manichean allegory.”⁵²

In reading JanMohamed’s manichean allegory, one gathers a perspective of the economy of desire that is not contrary or does not negate Homi Bhabha’s. In effect, even if JanMohamed provides an initial skepticism towards Bhabha’s ideas and tries to establish an alternative economy, he does so in a way that supplements Bhabha rather than providing a radically different view of colonial discourse. As mentioned, JanMohamed has two major disagreements with Bhabha. The first is Bhabha’s

⁵¹Anthony Wilden quoted in JanMohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory” 105.

failure to argue how the heterogeneous positions that make up the colonizer and colonized could be generalized or essentialized as homogeneous entities. The other concerns the privileging of the discursive or textual realms over the material impact of imperialism. Generally speaking JanMohamed's attempts to overcome the first problem remains unclear; although his implicit use of Marxian thought and explicit appropriation of Lacanian imaginary/symbolic distinction, to account for the second problem, also creates a fused material and discursive ground where a "unitary" colonial subject may be located. This, however, does not mark a significant departure from Bhabha since they both appeal to psychological processes as capable of conveying the internally split, fragmented, and ambivalent (sub)conscious onto the larger social practices of imperialism. In this case, Bhabha concentrates on ambivalence arising from the fetishization of the other, while in a similar vein, JanMohamed uses an internal psychological contest (read antagonism) that generates a mode of self/other relations. For otherness in colonialism, therefore, an economy exists because the representational ploys of colonial discourse, such as stereotyping, inferiorizing, and metonymic displacements (e.g. colonial peoples as substitutes for landscape or vice versa), are never straightforward or overt expressions of imperial power. Rather, there is a very complex machinery afoot that elucidates the subversive and potent use of otherness. Thus depending on the time or locale where imperial interests are being exerted, colonial otherness is never concrete or stable but fluctuates in accordance to a strategy of dominance.

Thus, the ambivalent economy of desire has a number of telling implications for the execution of academic disciplines. First, regardless of their claims to empiricism, all disciplines are constituted by self-other relations because they cannot escape a cultural ground that is also the locus of the western psychological image.

⁵²JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" 96.

Disciplines are thus elemental articulations of otherness as they are symbolic mediations of primal, imaginary desires. Therefore, to say that we can contrapuntally read a scientific text against a humanistic one does not necessarily mean that the two are equated with each other. Rather, it is the psychical extrojection of desire that intertwines them and permits them to be cross-associated. Second, the representational strategies of disciplines are put into effect by very complex metonymic and metaphorical processes. In this sense, the use of metonymy and metaphor cannot be thought of as stylistic or aesthetic language practices but expressions of a deeper psychical will. In academic as well as in literary works, all objects, characters, or processes, no matter how divorced they may appear to be from an extra-textual context, are always worldly. As seen in Said, Bhabha, and JanMohamed, otherness is never fixed or stable but fluctuates and vacillates. Finally, by embedding disciplinary otherness onto a more enduring economy of desire, it is possible to locate a shift from the colonial to the imperial disciplines. Thus even if anthropology, philology, and geography were instrumental for colonialism and that their present problematic lies elsewhere, they are still part of a larger process of imperial dominance. Simultaneously, this compels the need of examining the grander scope of the imperial disciplines and their attitudes towards the other. International relations is, therefore, a good example.

International Relations as an Imperial Discipline

To this point, this chapter has presented a number of themes about otherness and its relationship with the knowledge projects that were inaugurated through colonialism. For all its complexity and historical transformations, otherness materializes as an enduring position that the west uses in delineating itself from a set of categories and subject positions that are believed to be radically different and opposed to its own

culture. At the scene of imperial dominance, therefore, the figure of colonized peoples, lands, societies, and cultures visibly become subjects of a representational practice that fixes them into a signification system forming an opposition to the west. In this way, the other is also simultaneously threatening, dangerous, barbaric, licentious, and exotic. But one needs to be more circumspect about the role of power and interest in the construction of knowledge. While it is true that imperial power and the interest in conquest, territorial control, and resource acquisition had a tremendous hold over the way the colonized was to be known, there is a potential intransitivity between the representation of the other during colonial times and the twentieth century. To a large extent, this was due to the omission of "desire" as a fundamental aspect of imperialism. Disjunctively speaking, desire's ambivalent nature in forging the other as an object of revulsion as well as attraction produces an economy that regulates otherness in imperialism. Hence, far more than being just a deliberate system of sustaining difference, the economy of desire elaborates how in imperialism (not just colonialism) otherness does not have to reside in essential and material entities. Instead, the very basic alterity of the colonized person and his or her immediate effects vacillate between different nodes of signification. In some instances, the economy is allegorical and metonymic, thereby making it impossible to dissociate all forms of academic activity from the presence of the othered colonized subject. In other cases, the economy collaborates with historical, moral, and attitude transformations in colonialism without altering the intrinsic yearnings of imperial desire. But more importantly, it is the economy of desire that allows for the other to be reduced to the same (through modernization, Christianity, and universalism) without also giving up the elision between the western self and its other.

Such an economy of desire has tremendous impact on the inception of late imperial culture, and is particularly evident in twentieth century academic practices.

Through this economy, a discipline like international relations becomes not a faithful and objective account of international political life, but a mechanism that exposes how the discursive and material effects of imperialism employ changing strategies of otherness to sustain western hegemony. Conversely, the economy of desire also subverts the debates that shape the objectives, scope, explanatory principles, and methodology of IR. If it is said that IR consists in three debates—hermeneutical (between realism and liberalism), methodological (between reflective and positivist methods), and critical (between positivism and anti-positivism)—then the historical and even teleological locus of IR remains fixed at a particular cultural centre. In other words, by focusing on the economy of desire, it is possible to redirect IR's insular and exclusive register to a more secular dimension tied to the marginalized colonial subjects. For instance, it is only after the third debate that questions of difference and otherness have become more politically enabling in IR. While the previous two debates revolved around universal presuppositions, such as the international political world as a given or that every individual on earth was privy to observable global forces, the third sought to uncover ways to critique these universals. By doing so it was the ambition of the third debate to produce a ground on which differences could surface.

However concerned the third debate was with otherness, only a disproportionately smaller number of critical IR works dealt specifically with this topic. Even where otherness was most visibly addressed, it was treated in very constrained ways for instance falling back on tropes like identity.⁵³ In the writings of David Campbell, for instance, otherness is an important element because it allows him to relocate the role of identity in IR. For instance, Campbell relies on a

⁵³Iver B. Neumann, "Self and Other in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 2.2 (1996): 139–174.

dichotomistic division between self and other to illustrate how US foreign and security policies predicate on constructing a particular identity or to re-conceptualize ethics and responsibility in IR.⁵⁴ In doing so, otherness becomes merely a facet of deconstructionism meant as a challenge to IR's reliance on dichotomistic models of thought. Moreover, such methods inordinately privilege the self over alterity and fail to enunciate the specific identities of the other that such works so pontificatingly attempt to recover. Together with other works by William Connolly, James Der Derian, Iver Neumann, and Richard Ashley, Campbell's views, no matter how self-conscious they may be, form an element in the larger economy of desire. I will return to this in a more substantial way in chapter six. For now, two important concerns arising from the extent of the third debate's treatment of otherness must be noted. First, existing works on alterity and IR tend to focus on different aspects of international relations. Foreign policy conduct, diplomacy, and theory have been important objects of critique, but few writings have actually emerged on the link between otherness and the discipline of IR in general. Second, by relying on deconstructionist, power/knowledge, and social interaction models, these writings do not go far enough in addressing the issues of desire and ambivalence. Typically, the sort of critical consciousness one might associate with the third debate coincides with that of the colonial disciplines. If a basic critique of colonial disciplines begins by viewing imperial power and interest as central to maintaining a representational system aimed at delineating a western self from a non-western other, then a text like Campbell's *Writing Security* parallels this schema. For Campbell, the power and

⁵⁴See David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994); "Global Inscription: How Foreign Policy Constitutes the United States," *Alternatives* 15.3 (1990): 263–286; "The Deterritorialization of Responsibility: Levinas, Derrida, and Ethics after the End of Philosophy," *Alternatives* 19.4 (1994): 455–484; *Politics without Principle: Sovereignty, Ethics, and the Narratives of the Gulf War* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1993).

interest associated with US foreign policy also analogously maintains a representational mechanism that constructs and preserves an “American” identity from non-American ones.⁵⁵ Such primal delineations between self and other do not necessarily fit into the complex picture of IR because, if anything, identities are no longer so clear-cut or pronounced in the discipline. How does otherness locate itself in IR? How does it weather the moral changes with respect to imperialism, intervention, and sovereignty? How does it provide a perspective on an alterity that is also sometimes reduced to sameness? These are questions that the third debate is yet to address effectively.⁵⁶

The economy of desire does not necessarily account for or explain the existence of these paradoxes in contemporary IR, but strategically interpolates the discipline as integral to imperialism. What this refers to is that the process of otherness remains fundamental (and not axiomatic) to all forms of cultural productions because it occupies ambivalent and allegorical positions in the western psyche. Specifically, these cultural products assume a mantle of dynamism and adaptiveness because they

⁵⁵David Campbell, *Writing Security*.

⁵⁶There is one book that tries to account for some of these concerns. In an attempt to discuss representational strategies between what is today the first world and third world, Roxanne Lynne Doty employs existing theories on power and knowledge to examine the persistence of inequality. Mainstream international relations is largely complicit with this, and draws on past imperial practices in order to sustain the representation of north-south relations. Doty understands that there have been changes in academic views on these relations but the lingering effects of otherness continue to effect the way IR is performed. Doty looks at Robert Jackson's *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (I shall also be examining this text in the following pages) and Stephen Krasner's *Structural Conflict* to exemplify how even IR writings during and after the 1980s still draw on colonial stereotypes, even though the language and terms of reference are extremely worldly. For instance, sovereignty, democracy, conflict, and human rights. However, Doty fails to appreciate the operations of imperial desire within contemporary IR, and as a result, falls back on the assumption that the “repetition and variation” or IR discourse is an aspect of intertextuality. Particularly, she locates Jackson and Krasner's understanding of the third world as “intertexts linked with a wide array of discourses and representational strategies” (147). In addition, she believes that these texts are unable to shrug off the first world/third world delineation because the “power of earlier representations” align these oppositions with those during “earlier imperial encounters” (161–162). Roxanne Lynne Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The*

incorporate a system of othering that is never fixed. Rather, they track the internal dissensions of the western mind where alterity is always disjunctively split: for instance, between the imaginary and the symbolic, and metaphor and metonym. Thus, the presence of otherness is not always easy to discern since this internal economy often times dispels it with aggressivity, accentuates it through exoticism, subsumes it as self (as a necessary self-reflective surface), or hides it through allegory. IR as one of these cultural products is no less prone to these effects of the psyche because otherness remains a vital discipline constituting element. Far from its project in creating universal constructs like sovereignty, interstate conflict, and the global citizen, IR harbours an internal ambivalence towards the location of the other in the discipline. IR almost entirely ignores the most material manifestation of the other—women and colonized people (this includes their cultural and territorial effects). Yet no matter how divorced from these subject positions the discipline claims to be, the other returns to haunt IR's execution at every turn. One may ask why is it that IR claims to be universal but needs to constantly celebrate its western philosophical roots, or query the normative efforts made by academics to patch up loopholes whenever established paradigms fail to live up to their theoretical capacities. It is also possible to query how representational strategies are at work even though some IR texts may be unspecific about political actors and agencies or may even have "deferred" references to them. In order to put these concerns into proper perspective, one must therefore turn to conceive of IR as complicit with the economy of desire.

Let me explain myself a bit more by referring to two IR texts written in the 1990s. The first is Robert Jackson's *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* and the other is James Goldgeier and Michael McFaul's "A Tale of

Politics of Representation in North-South Relations (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

Two Worlds: Core and Periphery in the Post-Cold War Era.”⁵⁷ As works written at a particular juncture in the history of IR and under the shadow of a heavily Americanized discipline, they reflect certain worldly concerns. In particular, the global political uncertainties coming at the end of the cold war combined with an influential US policy-making mechanism caused a dramatic shift in IR’s research objectives and agenda. While questions of Soviet aggression, military balance of power, alliance structures motivated IR specialists to think of the world in Realist terms during the cold war, the canonical IR of the 1990s had to reconsider the nature of state sovereignty, international security, and new issues of transnational flows. In a sense, this new agenda coincides with US preoccupation with new security threats from the Third World and a renewed missionary zeal to spread democracy and human rights. It is at such a juncture that Jackson, Goldgeier, and McFaul are located, for in spite of dealing with different topics, they have much in common. Both texts begin with the premise that Realist IR, while possessing some amount of salience, need to be overhauled as far as their conceptions of state sovereignty and interactive nature are concerned. Their claims of novelty lie on the assumption that the world has truly changed and that there will always be a structural, cultural, and political lag between the first world and the third, and between core and periphery. Yet, densely embedded into these two texts are numerous ironies and paradoxes that appear suspiciously to regurgitate elements of imperial desire.

⁵⁷Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, “A Tale of Two Worlds: Core and Periphery in the Post-Cold War Era,” *International Organization* 46.2 (1992): 467–491. See also a number of other works in a similar vein. For instance, Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, “Why Africa’s Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood,” *World Politics* 35.1 (1982): 1–24; and Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal, “Triumph of the West: Its Ideas are Shaping the Globe,” *The Australian Financial Review* 6 Mar. 1998: 1–2 Review section.

For Jackson's *Quasi-States*, these ironies and paradoxes reside in the manner by which an Orientalist representation of the third world occurs in tandem with an almost humanistic attempt to transcend the moral dilemmas associated with colonialism's aftermath. Jackson's text begins innocently enough as an inquiry into IR's founding assumption that state sovereignty is a universal and coherent experience across the world. But by comparing first world states with those of the third world, he finds essential differences that justify a delineation of sovereignty. Using Isaiah Berlin's negative and positive liberty where human beings' control over themselves is split between a legal-social arrangement that allows for an individual's "immunity from others" and an individual's intrinsic capabilities to secure his own independence respectively, Jackson develops the terms, negative and positive sovereignty.⁵⁸ Remaining fairly faithful to their original use, he asserts that positive sovereignty is understood to be the original model of "empirical" statehood surfacing dramatically in Europe during the peace of westphalia. In a more contemporary sense, positive sovereignty is, in most cases, practiced by first world states and characterizes the possession of an internal consensus as well as the economic and military wherewithal to safeguard their own sovereignty.⁵⁹ Negative sovereignty, on the other hand, does not rely on the states' internal abilities or the right to govern but attain their independence more appropriately through an international legal courtesy.⁶⁰ In other words, at the end of formal colonialism, a wholly different structure emerged such that a (former colonial) state's stage of development, ethnic composition, and political system did not matter. Such states through decolonization became sovereign in all respects merely through an international legal system that

⁵⁸Jackson 26–31.

⁵⁹Jackson 29.

⁶⁰Jackson 29–30.

recognizes them as such. Thus, Jackson recognizes third world states as exemplars of negative sovereignty and are the “quasi-states” he refers to in his title.

This division between positive and negative sovereignty, and between empirical states and quasi-states is not without its cultural solipsism. By also assigning the first world to the position of empirical states and the third world to that of quasi-states, Jackson relies on a simplistic schema that constructs the first world as liberal, democratic, and progressive while the third world is relegated to stereotyping. Consider the following passage:

Quasi-states possess arms but they usually point inward at subjects rather than outward at foreign powers which indicates that either no significant external threat exists or an internal threat is greater. Looking outward there can be no balance of power or international equilibrium based on the credibility of sovereigns. Quasi-states by definition are deficient and defective as apparatuses of power. They are not positively sovereign or naturally free. Instead, they are constitutionally independent which is a formal and not a substantive condition. Looking inward, there can hardly be a social contract since the ruler is threatening (at least some of) his subjects and evidently they him. This is an instance not of ‘covenants, without the sword’ being ‘but words’ but of swords without a covenant signifying nothing but force and terror. The quasi-state is an uncivil more than a civil place: it does not yet possess the rule of law based on the social contract. The populations of quasi-states have not yet instituted a covenant. If no covenant exists, there can be neither subject nor sovereign nor commonwealth: no empirical state.⁶¹

These words bear an eerie resemblance to Orientalist texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in which the orient and its people are not just stereotypically reduced as inferior or threatening to a pre-given order of normality but also the opposite of how the west chooses to construct itself. Jackson’s text, however, goes beyond the category of being merely Orientalist because it possesses its own rectifying and dissociative mechanism. What this means is that however much one may read into Jackson’s text and note the abundance of value laden terms, the subconscious prejudice afoot, or the inability to shrug off the institutional influence

⁶¹Jackson 168.

that forces the third world to be thought in set ways, the text suspends its own element of disbelief.

As a purported piece of academic writing, *Quasi-States* erects three nodes of reading: as an objective observation of sovereignty, as a self-conscious employer of value laden concepts, and as a advocate of moral political change. At any given moment, the text slides among these three nodes, constantly deferring the prospect that it can be solidly any one of these at any given moment. This, however, only exemplifies the complex functioning of an ambivalent desire because it causes a primal, intricate, and quiet form of othering to be interspersed with a conscious (symbolic) attempt to mediate it with the prevailing set of moral rules. For instance, Jackson strives to be self-aware of the biases his text could promote but switches to a form of objectivism about IR before hinting a moral purpose behind his study. Within the span of a few of his introductory pages, such vacillation can be seen.⁶² He begins by saying that value judgements have to be made, but then glosses over this by saying that “categorical goods” do not exist in international relations.⁶³ Then, he goes on to suggest that while a “cultural relativism” makes it difficult for first world academics to evaluate the third world, the conditions third world citizens face under their governments should inspire efforts to help them find a voice.⁶⁴ Jackson claims that such is his agenda before ironically imputing that his concepts of negative and positive sovereignty “do not signify ‘bad’ and ‘good’.”⁶⁵ Even elsewhere in the text, he tries to empathetically demonstrate that historical Europe is not unlike present

⁶²Jackson 9–11.

⁶³Jackson 9–10.

⁶⁴Jackson 10–11.

⁶⁵Jackson 11.

quasi-states but does away with it before it can become too morally incriminating; as in this passage:

The political history of Europe can be read without distortion as a long record of political incivility. Postwar Eastern Europe continued the malpractice. Today, however, it is a particularly evident outside the West where citizenship is scarcely more than a nominal status with little or no real purchasing power. This is because the Third World state is usually the possession and instrument of elites who often act as if sovereignty is their licence to exploit people.⁶⁶

I do not consider Jackson's wavering from objectivism to self-awareness and to moral advocacy a form of inconsistency or incoherence. Instead it is a good illustration of how desire is present at every point. Hence beneath the surface of a text that purports to observe (and liberate) a group of people and to fix a problem in canonical IR theory lies a dynamic process of otherness that is tied to the western psyche. If *Quasi-states* were to comprise of so many cross-cutting functions then it reflects the inner psychical will to display aggressivity towards the other while also desiring the other as a completion of its ego. The basic othering of the third world as quasi-states fulfils the psyche's need for an object of revulsion just as the quasi-states' negation as an opposite of the first world satisfies the western self's demands of primary narcissism. Similarly, the appropriation of quasi-states as both a critique of and contribution towards sovereignty theories in IR can also be read in this light.

This hidden desire for the other can also be noticed in Goldgeier and McFaul's "A Tale of Two Worlds." This is not surprising considering that Jackson and they share a same interest in accounting for theoretical problems in post-cold war IR. But there is a slight difference between them as Goldgeier and McFaul appear to adopt a larger level of synthesis (i.e. between the realist and liberal paradigms) and are more ambiguous and silent about particular identities owing to the use of global "structures" as terms of reference. At the end of the cold war, they discover certain

⁶⁶Jackson 140.

changes in the way the international system operates. While the cold war necessitated the maintenance of vast security and military apparatuses, a bipolar world system, and balance of power politics, what one witnesses now, at least in many parts of the world, is a system based on wealth maximization through negotiation and compromise. In short, Goldgeier and McFaul believe that the international system can be better understood if it were divided into two coexisting but hierarchically ordered structures (“worlds” as they call them). At the “core,” there is a convergence towards shared norms as economic interdependence, democracy, and collective institutional actions force a shift away from structural realism. At the periphery however is the confluence of a wide range of political systems (from “democratic” ones to “monarchic” ones) whose interaction, while honed somewhat towards wealth creation, basically reaffirms the applicability of realism. In other words, at the periphery, insecurity, militarism, territorial aggrandizement, and the unilateral acquisition of power persist. This is where the ambivalence in “A Tale of Two Worlds” begins. Goldgeier and McFaul are not explicitly clear about whether or not the core-periphery separation relates to transnational, and thereby horizontal, structures or if there are definite states belonging to either category. Right at the beginning, it appears that the core-periphery delineation refers to a circumstantial and normative categorization all states must undergo, hence a given state can at about the same period of time behave in ways symptomatic of either the core and periphery.⁶⁷ But later, the authors insist that there are definitively core and peripheral states that, although not necessarily paralleling the first world/third world division, remain firmly tied to their assigned categories. Thus at the periphery one finds irredentist states in parts of the Middle East, central

⁶⁷Goldgeier and McFaul 469–470; 475–478.

Asia, and the former Soviet Union,⁶⁸ while in contradistinction the core is, by deduction, made up of the more communally minded states of Europe, North America, and East Asia.

Even if the composition of Goldgeier and McFaul's core-periphery does not readily correspond to the core-periphery distinction during the time of colonialism, this mismatch or slippage produces its own imperial logic, and by doing so invoke the economy of desire. The article first and foremost rationalizes itself against a teleological principle that all states are at different stages of social, cultural, and political development. Although the authors reject Fukuyama's argument that we (meaning the west) have arrived at the final stage of this development,⁶⁹ their underlying logic strongly sees states as progressing towards a final destiny that is yet to be known. This teleology is by no means a new one but reveals that Goldgeier and McFaul's core-periphery is not a radically new way of thinking about the world. It is, so to speak, a different rung of the evolutionary ladder of modernization and the civilizing mission. In this case, Johannes Fabian's thesis that the western gaze produces the other by the denial of coevalness has much relevance.⁷⁰ As Goldgeier and McFaul's story goes, today's core states were, at one time, like today's periphery, given to endless militarism, threats of nuclear exterminism, and relentless bickering. While the end of the cold war and the increasing importance of transnational economic flows have something to do with the emergence of the core states, the authors do not qualify how this change came about. This preoccupation with describing the core-periphery phenomenon rather than accounting for it promotes an imperial mystique keeping the periphery out of the core. In this connection, the core

⁶⁸Goldgeier and McFaul 479–480.

⁶⁹Goldgeier and McFaul 468–469.

remains a symbol of unwavering progress, while the periphery is confined to a different time and to a disjunctive history.

There is without a doubt an important role for the periphery, and far more than being just another node of the international system it becomes the location where otherness is situated. One of the most immediate readings of "A Tale of Two Worlds" as an example of contemporary colonial discourse is that periphery serves as object of representation through which the core defines itself. This, however, is only part of a larger picture of the economy of desire because there are deeper allegorical forces at work. When Goldgeier and McFaul apply the concept of the core, there is a superficial avoidance of Eurocentricism because its members include, apart from the United States and the former European imperial powers, a number of liberal economies that were also former colonial possessions. As if to provide the semblance that the world has truly progressed beyond colonial times, such an inclusion has two interrelated levels that are tied to maintaining the west as the core's rightful signified. At the secondary level, the non-western states are full members of the core because their membership of which reaffirms and revalidates the "success" of modernization, political and social development, and the civilizing mission. At the primary level, however, the core-periphery system during the period of formal imperialism is so deeply entrenched in contemporary social practices that forms an inflection in anything that succeeds it. These two levels are mediated by an allegorical function that uses the notion of a parasitic and unfixed periphery to reveal the text's location of otherness. Again, if "A Tale of Two Worlds" is emblematic of western psychical desire, then the secondary level of Goldgeier and McFaul's core-periphery system reflects the basic gratification of the need for the imaginary, and hence a very simple

⁷⁰Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

conflation of other and self within the core. Such a relationship cannot be indefinitely maintained because the western self must also regard the other with aggressivity, and a concept of the periphery that is not so clearly defined and whose membership is not so specifically assigned lessens this psychological tension. For this reason, it is also possible to adduce that the authors' concluding warning that some core states (e.g. China, Russia, Germany, and Japan) are in danger of falling back into the ways of periphery⁷¹ is more a product of this ambivalence rather than a structural imperfection. Similarly, the primary level is more profound because it parallels the psyche's symbolic stage and its capability to mediate desire without completely giving up the needs of the imaginary. The two levels become extremely symbiotic since the periphery becomes negotiable. This does not necessarily mean that it takes advantage of the "grey areas" within the core, but that its very presence is consciously used to constitute the core in every sense. In a word, reminding that the periphery is also in the core.

The works of Jackson, Goldgeier, and McFaul are unique texts within international relations because they seek to reform certain deficiencies within the canons. However, they are also not atypical because they reflect a manifestation of desire and otherness that appears fairly consistent across IR's broad terrain. Such examples of desire, as I have attempted to show in the preceding, cannot be found in that which is explicitly written but must be reconsidered and reread as part of a larger social/psychical will. Both *Quasi-states* and "A Tale of Two Worlds" easily lend themselves to this critique because their emphasis on dichotomies and representational strategies rely on a system of othering that transcends that of the colonial disciplines. It is in effect constant fluctuations between self and other that are discursively tailored to avoid easy detection. Their refusal or uncertainty about the

⁷¹See Goldgeier and McFaul 488–490.

composition of political agency as well as their implicit incorporation of imperial designs show how IR works to sustain western preeminence. Both texts are, however, fairly obscure in the larger corpus of IR, and much more argument will have to be applied to the defining texts of the discipline. Such is the purpose of this thesis, and the following chapters aim to further explain how otherness via this economy of desire integrates imperialism with IR.

Chapter Four

IMPERIALISM BY ANOTHER NAME

America's Empire in International Relations

The cultural imperialism which disavows economic advantages, but gains a selfish satisfaction in the aggrandisement of a national culture through imperialistic power, may reveal itself in the most refined and generous souls.

Reinhold Niebuhr¹

The most widely practiced disguise and justification of imperialism has, however, always been the ideology of anti-imperialism. It is so widely used because it is the most effective of all ideologies of imperialism. As, according to Huey Long, fascism will come to the United States in the guise of antifascism, so imperialism will come to many a country in the guise of anti-imperialism.

Hans J. Morgenthau²

In chapters 2 and 3 I argued that a study of the connection between imperialism and disciplinary international relations (IR) provides a useful tool in the analysis of contemporary colonial discourse. Far from having disappeared with the dissolution of formal colonialism at the end of the second world war, imperialism can be reinterpreted as a volatile and protean entity, subversively altering its appearance, meanings, and scope in tandem with changing moral standards. The concept of “disjuncture” as opposed to “delineation” was, therefore, formulated in response to the impossibility of articulating (within a language proscribed by modernity) the

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949) 93.

²Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th ed. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1985) 108.

conflation of domination and emancipation in western discourse. How else is one to suggest that the imperialist-inspired referents of universalism-particularity, self-other, and civilization-barbarism can co-function unparadoxically? How else is one to express the idea that the temporal segments of imperialism then and imperialism now are both distinct but also continuous? If disjuncture had anything to proffer it would be to interweave IR and imperialism as having separate teleological paths but a unified vision of the larger scene of western domination. And so, drawing from a number of cultural critics, disjuncture was argued to have intertextual effects allowing for “contrapuntal” readings between texts that deny their consanguinity to each other, for the exposing of their worldliness, and for the penetration of rampant narrative misalignments. In more ways than one, disjuncture is also a product of the most primal constructions of identity, and the intrinsic processes of self and other produce ambivalence that extends to the social realm. Thus the recognition of the “universal” in IR cannot be but an external projection of the west’s desire (and inability) to incorporate the other into the self. By so doing it leaves behind traces—textual allegories and metonymic functions—that both exclude and subsume the other from what is known to be the “international world.” By being twinned with international relations, imperialism is capable of being recognized as having discursive, transformative, as well as recurring aspects.

The preceding assertions somewhat understate the scope of the discussion contained in the earlier chapters, but they were necessary to preface a number of questions that need to be addressed. How does IR as a twentieth century discipline also have residual aspects of the imperial past? How does one qualify IR’s imperial present? How does IR’s heterogeneity and eclectic nature become a singular expression of western dominance? If academic disciplines are said to parallel an ongoing social intentionality or reflect the prevailing configuration of political power,

what does one deduce of IR? To a certain extent these questions have been theoretically elaborated as aspects of disjuncture and ambivalence but are yet to be substantially exemplified. While IR is undoubtedly a more recent incarnation of the western social science than the earlier colonial disciplines like anthropology, history, and philology, it nonetheless possesses its convolution, mechanisms of moral and intellectual rectification, as well as internal dissension. If IR appears so complex, where does one begin? However daunting this task may seem, there are areas of theoretical simplification, reductionism, and abstraction that have popularly come to constitute IR's mainstream. Known as "realism" this version of IR is something of a misnomer because it is a fusion of so many philosophical, cultural, and aesthetic traditions as to be capable of having any objective or explanatory power about the way the political world really operates. Internally realist IR vacillates among observers of international affairs, strategic studies, and theorists as either a manner of objective world descriptions or philosophical testaments about the belligerent, uncooperative, and anarchic aspects of human nature. Nevertheless this is where my story about IR and imperialism's disjunctive relationship continues. In this, and the following chapters, I will selectively read a number of texts that demonstrate certain episodes where transformations in the study of IR have only led to marginal shifts in the imperial attitude. It is not my intention to provide an explanation for these transformations but to show how IR's mainstream has altered in reaction to what it perceives as changing world realities and increasing dissent among its own ranks. In principle such an approach tries to accentuate the three modalities it has encountered since 1945. First, within itself as it moved from a hermeneutical or classical variant of realism to its structural and positivist version. All of this takes place within the acclamation of IR as an American social science. Second, as a geographical and spatial reconsideration following the creation of the "new world order" in the 1990s.

And third, as an emancipatory effort contained within new cultural movements like postmodernism.

In particular the approach this chapter takes in exploring the disjuncture between imperialism and IR is to locate the discipline at its contemporary foundations. Granted that IR was framed through the liberal ebullience of the post-World War I world and that the British academia had sired their own breed of scholars, I attribute these foundations to the end of the second world war and to IR's virtual monopoly by American institutions. My intention is not to belittle the British IR venture. Indeed they have contributed immensely to the discipline and such figures like E.H. Carr, Martin Wight, and Hedley Bull have provided a distinctly British flavour to the discipline. But with respect to contemporary expressions of imperialism, IR is said to have American foundations because it reveals so much of the parallels between the US appropriation of the discipline and its superceding of the British as the new imperial power. Furthermore American IR in itself exposes much about the ambivalence within the US over the notion of empire. Even in most recent times, amidst speculations about America's dwindling resources and political wherewithal, there is no shortage of texts redefining the role of US power or the nature of its expansionism.³ For example the Managing Editor of *Foreign Affairs*, Fareed Zakaria, has recently published an unoriginal book attesting to the fact that states rationally expand for the reasons of classical (which he later redefines as "state-centered realism") or defensive realism.⁴ This means that states expand either because they simply have the capability of doing so and wish to further acquire power and status, or because it is simply a preemptive move to provide its security.

³See for example Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

⁴Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

Nonetheless Zakaria uses the US to demonstrate that the former is true and that it is only through the acquisition of power that expansionism follows.

What is noticeable here (and elsewhere) is the tacit celebration of American might and its expansionist past, but done so mechanically as to ignore the more imperialistic or morally disturbing consequences of the deployment of US power. And it is at this juncture that the ambivalence materializes. First, perhaps there are few places in the world where there has been so much ambivalence over imperialism and the use of political power as in the United States. US policymakers and intellectuals often celebrate America as a truly “exceptional” nation, distinct from the aggrandizing record of European expansionism. By being styled as promoting worldwide democracy and self-determination, America’s own historical leap from continental expansionism to the acquisition of overseas territories came to be a denied or contested memory, sitting problematically with its avowed anti-imperialism. Hence the euphemisms delegated to such actions—globalism, internationalism, Pan-Americanism, interventionism, multilateralism, and non-isolationism⁵—have been preferred descriptions of US foreign policy attitudes. Even its behaviour overseas has been regarded as a demonstration of “world leadership” and “responsibility” and not imperialism. And furthermore the term, “superpower,” has come to be a preferred label over “empire,” hinting to the structural possession of power in itself rather than in the actual use of power. This semantic play is not a trivial by-product of US imperial ambivalence but exemplifies a restless search for a national identity that intertwines the desire for domination and liberation.

⁵So ingrained is the anti-imperial stance on mainstream US society that these labels have become the currency for discussions of foreign policy in political, social and academic circles. In texts on diplomatic history and foreign policy these terms have been accepted to be more “precise” and less value laden than simply imperialism. See for instance Stephen E. Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism: Foreign Policy since 1938*, 4th ed. (New York: Penguin, 1985).

The second reason why the United States' impact on IR allows us to better appreciate that discipline's affect on contemporary colonial discourse is that nation's ascent to world power in the twentieth century. At the height of the British empire, for instance, an elaborate cultural system was inaugurated to promote certain aesthetic and technological knowledge that was in line with the expression of imperial power. Thus Victorian and modern literature, Orientalist texts, paintings, scientific and academic writings were mobilized to support the proposition that British were "truly" superior and that its colonial subjects were deserving of their overlordship. As British power began to wane during the first half of the twentieth century, these cultural artifacts became eclipsed by a new set of writing that had emerged from the other side of the Atlantic. Although the British colonial text did have its coeval counterparts in the US during the 19th and early 20th century, the newer American imperial texts possessed and fitted more precisely with the social and cultural changes that were taking place during the interregnum and after the second world war. To a large extent the British colonial texts lost some of their appeal due to what Ali Behdad describes as "belatedness," the loss of the exotic, the unfamiliar, and the other through the widening forces of universalization and globalization.⁶ As mentioned in the previous chapter texts bearing the ultra-modernist stance of American culture and the positivist mark of the social sciences came to adapt very well, especially to the formally decolonized world. In particular the US social sciences appealed because they appeared to strive for a pragmatism and objectivity that was unencumbered by the prejudices of an imperial past. What transpires in such a case is necessarily the obliviousness to the incorporation of the subjectivities of colonized into an international world that was deemed universal. If anything such a belief in the social sciences developed simultaneously with US global

⁶Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham and

power and, as such, that power is in itself constituted through social science knowledge.

The third reason for the US example as a starting point of query for the IR-imperialism relationship is the virtual monopoly of that discipline by American universities and research institutes. Related to the above elaboration, the ascent of US power did have much to do with the increasing acceptance of the credibility of its type of social sciences worldwide. After all, American theories are used to account for an American-created world. Yet the pervasiveness of the US social sciences is founded upon a larger rationale as well as confined by its own particularity. If the US social sciences enjoy a tremendous amount of influence in institutions outside of the US, their distinctive origins reveal an intellectual transplantation that has come via a form of imperialism that is different from the earlier ones. As Dorothy Ross mentions, the social sciences in the US is largely a product of post-civil war American society, emanating from its sense of exceptionalism and faith in liberal and positivist doctrines.⁷ Even for Stanley Hoffmann, international relations was acclaimed "an American Social Science" because the democratization and positivism found in the US increased the transparency with which the public could observe the conduct of diplomacy and foreign affairs.⁸ As such it fostered the growth of the disciplines in ways not found "in the rest of the world."⁹ Hoffmann provides more reasons for calling IR an American social science, and even though he stresses that it

London: Duke University Press, 1994).

⁷Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁸Stanley Hoffmann, "An American Social Science: International Relations," *Daedalus* 106.3 (1977): 42–43. See also Ekkehart Krippendorf, "The Dominance of American Approaches in International Relations," *Millennium* 16.2 (1987): 207–214. Krippendorf does not adopt as positive a view as Hoffman on the strength of American IR, but even as he seeks to uncover the discipline's shortcomings, he tacitly recognizes the US policy-oriented research as having greatly influenced IR.

⁹Hoffmann 48.

has a number of shortcomings (like American IR's lack of historicity), he does so within a general celebratory attitude.¹⁰ Nonetheless this particularity of IR raises a few questions. If IR were to be tied to a specific geographical location and national identity, why is it said to have global applicability? How much attachment does US social science have to imperialism as a valid category? To what extent does US imperialism echo its earlier antecedents, particularly the version practiced by European countries?

The notion of American ambivalence towards imperialism is therefore a very crucial aspect in the study of contemporary colonial discourse. No doubt American imperialism is now different from its earlier incarnations,¹¹ just as the British had different conceptions of empire from the French in the nineteenth century. At the same time, it is also impossible to separate such practices with the larger structures of western imperialism, and it is crucial to understand that it is disjunctively coherent and consistent. This chapter argues that a critical reading of international relations texts written in the decades immediately preceding and following the second world war allows us to situate that ambivalence as pursuing a teleological progression. This is the transformation of IR's understanding of imperialism from outright physical and territorial acquisition to convergence as a scientific principle. But at the same time this teleology is anything but linear as the meanings of imperialism have vacillated backwards and forwards more incessantly. The authors that this chapter is concerned with, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau, George Liska in the mid-20th century as

¹⁰In other words, Hoffmann attributes American IR's shortcomings like premature theoretical formulation, lack of historicity, and conceptions of a rigid dualistic hierarchical international structure to beliefs and values that are uniquely American. Thus the "quest for certainty" and the fear of retreating to the past are used as some explanations for these problems. Ironically instead of devaluing the position of IR these critiques tacitly reaffirm the US social science culture. See Hoffmann 56–59.

¹¹For example, the form of imperialism practiced at the end of the Spanish-American war in 1898.

well as the anti-imperialist writers in the early 1900s, have indeed produced seminal works to which contemporary mainstream IR owes its origins to. Yet their representations of imperialism, morality, power, as well as the world exterior to the United States have been more disingenuous, reflecting a desire for American supremacy on the one hand and an equitable world without a hegemonic power on the other. What do we make of this, and how does this exemplify the disjunctive bases of imperialism?

This chapter, therefore, tries to account for the emergence of international relations in the US context and queries how the discipline has made the notion of imperialism extremely opaque and virtually absent from America's conduct of foreign relations. Together with widespread changes in moral concepts, linguistic techniques, and constructions of otherness, IR's inception as social science has been one of substitution, allowing both material and subliminal expressions of US power to circumvent the moral aporia now associated with "traditional" forms of imperialism. I begin this story both in 1898 and 1945, two crucial junctures in American history. For in no other periods of time have there been such an acute revelation of the US desire for global supremacy interlocked with the military, political, and economic wherewithal to fulfill it. But these two periods are also disjunctive because they revolve around two very different views of the world. In 1898 imperialism was more tangibly expressed through the European precedence, conflating it with formal colonialism. The anti-imperialism that was to ensue in the US, thus, came to revolve around the acquisition of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines following the end of the Spanish-American War. At the end of the second world war, however, facing a rapidly decolonizing world, imperialism was regarded pejoratively and as the US made its exponential climb to global hegemony, the concept itself became contested as an applicable description of American diplomacy.

I argue that an appreciation of these historical transformations is needed in order for the substitution or allegorical misalignments to be recognized as more pervasive and coherent imperial textual strategies. This leads to a dilemma: how is it that the dissimilar imperial contexts can be unified by textual strategies, and how is it that “unique” American appropriations of imperialism can also be re-integrated into the larger picture of western dominance? This chapter goes on to reiterate some of the features of disjuncture by stressing that opposing effects often slip and bypass each other but may lead to a utilitarian end that is also a consequence of the ambivalent psyche. Finally these textual strategies are exposed through readings of “early” international relations, exploring how the IR figures regurgitate these strategies of narrative substitution and misalignment.

Historical Missions

In mainstream American society today the use of the term, imperialism, to describe US conduct towards the rest of the world has all but disappeared. Even public discussions about its manifestation anywhere else in the world has become increasingly rare as it becomes relegated to history. There are a few exceptions. Notably the subject of imperialism remains largely the preserve of academic and intellectual circles. Second it is used rhetorically by politicians and statesmen against the actions of its enemies like the former USSR. And third it is used by interest groups outside the US in objection to America's economic and political preponderance; for instance, what certain French elites considered as cultural imperialism in the creation of a Euro-Disneyland there. At first glance this rarefaction appears to come in distinct contrast to the anti-imperialist debate during the start of the twentieth century. This distinctness is true insofar as imperialism is understood unwaveringly as the actual acquisition of colonies and is seen to have a

wide base of protagonists. For during this period of time, imperialism did become a tangible matter of public debate, mobilizing interest groups, intellectuals, diplomats, and politicians, and even creating official institutions like the Anti-Imperialist League. Furthermore, speeches, popular presses and literature directly or satirically brought the debate down to the middle and working classes. However, if imperialism is perceived to be an underlying, discursive effect of western dominance, then its historical record is more indeterminate. For instance, even if imperialism-as-public-debate re-emerged during the anti-Vietnam war protests in the 1960s and 70s, it had become more of a hybrid matter; synthesizing and cross associating accumulated historical knowledge since the 1900s with such worldly conditions as the civil rights movement, counter-cultural revolt, and the ongoing cold war. Such reappearance after a fifty-year "absence" from public discourse does not imply that imperialism recurs through phenomenal shifts in history, but that it possesses a more dynamic nature adjusting to the changing conditions of the day.

To illustrate the subversive and divisive effects of contemporary US imperialism, it will be necessary to begin with its "founding" moment in 1898 and to read that consequence as the ambivalence of the mission. What I mean by this is that imperialism is constituted in an overall missionary goal that is either intended or accidental. Such a goal does not have to be religious¹² but refers to the export of any justification for imperial rule. This is the position of perceived superiority and is paradoxically used by both imperialism's advocates and critics to argue why

¹² It is virtually impossible to separate the religious aspect from the secular in the conduct of imperialism. As Bhabha quotes Eric Stokes, a "transference" has taken place in which "religious emotion" has spilled over into "secular purposes." Homi K. Bhabha, "Articulating the Archaic: Cultural Difference and Colonial Nonsense," *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 124. Indeed the zeal and passion that have been incorporated into imperialist actions oftentimes reach a religious fervour even though the driving force could be something more secular. Democracy, for the US, is one such case. By saying that the mission does not have to be religious, I am stating that the mission has to be known as more potent underlying force in which the reasons behind imperialism cannot be so neatly and rationally delineated into categories like economic or strategic.

imperialism should or should not take place. Thus the mission is always ambivalent because even if anti-imperialists decry the exertion of power by their state, the language and logic employed by their critique has to come through the very discourse that lends credence to the mission itself.¹³ Thus the irony made popular by the 1835 Macaulay “minute” in recognizing the totality of democratic ideals and representative government on the one hand but deferring its implementation in India on the other is an example of this ambivalent mission.¹⁴ More appropriately in the context of US history, both the proponents and opponents of imperialism have drawn on the same principles of the mission, that is, the supremacy of American values and exceptionalism. For the opponents these values—freedom, democracy, and self-determination—are the reasons why the US should not become imperialist, while for the proponents these reasons form the basis of American expansionism. Woodrow Wilson’s idealistic catchphrase, “making the world safe for democracy” is an example of this. Without a doubt the circularity of the “mission” serves as an important channel between imperialism past and present.

In terms of the actions following the Spanish-American War in 1898, the anti-imperialist debates came to represent the mission in such conflicting ways that opposing sides could not effectively be delineated. What was in contention was whether or not the US should acquire Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines from Spain, and if so what form of governance would be applied to these territories. Without a doubt the proponents and opponents of America’s foray into imperialism saw themselves as unique to and different from Europe’s colonial experience and believed that US political values like liberty, democracy, and self-government were to set them apart from the monarchic and autocratic ways of the Old World.

¹³See Homi K. Bhabha, “Sly Civility,” *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 93–101.

¹⁴Bhabha, “Sly Civility” 94–95.

Imperialism was more or less agreed, as Thompkins defines it, to be “the actual political domination of one people by another.”¹⁵ Such a definition allowed supporters and opponents to deny being imperialists, although this might be the label directed by the latter against the former. For the advocates of US colonial acquisition, their principles arose as a combination of “natural,” idealistic, and pragmatic considerations. In this regard, it is true that every advocate had his motive. For Alfred Thayer Mahan the publication of his *Importance of Sea Power Upon History* celebrated the greatness of the nation and the necessity of sound naval strategic principles and called for urgency of expansionism.¹⁶ For Reverend Josiah Strong it was both the fear of national overpopulation and God’s divine intention of a superior Anglo-Saxon race that legitimated colonial acquisition. For Theodore Roosevelt, who was so conscionably aware of dangers of imperialism, the Monroe Doctrine’s call for keeping Europe out of Latin America justified it. But perhaps few advocates of American imperialism came as close as Senator A.J. Beveridge in displaying the full scope of the mission. While claiming that these territories had to be acquired for economic reasons (for instance, maintaining shipping and telegraphic networks), he also tried to make overseas expansion as “natural” as America’s continental expansion and manifest destiny during the preceding decades.¹⁷ Then one may also ascertain Beveridge’s divine (but not necessarily original) interpretation of imperialism’s function. As in this passage:

God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples... for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. He has made us the master

¹⁵E. Berkeley Thompkins, *Anti-Imperialism in the United States: The Great Debate* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970) 2.

¹⁶Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (London: Samson Low, Marston, 1889).

¹⁷V.G. Kiernan, *America: The New Imperialism: From White Settlement to World Hegemony* (London: Zed Books, 1978) 85.

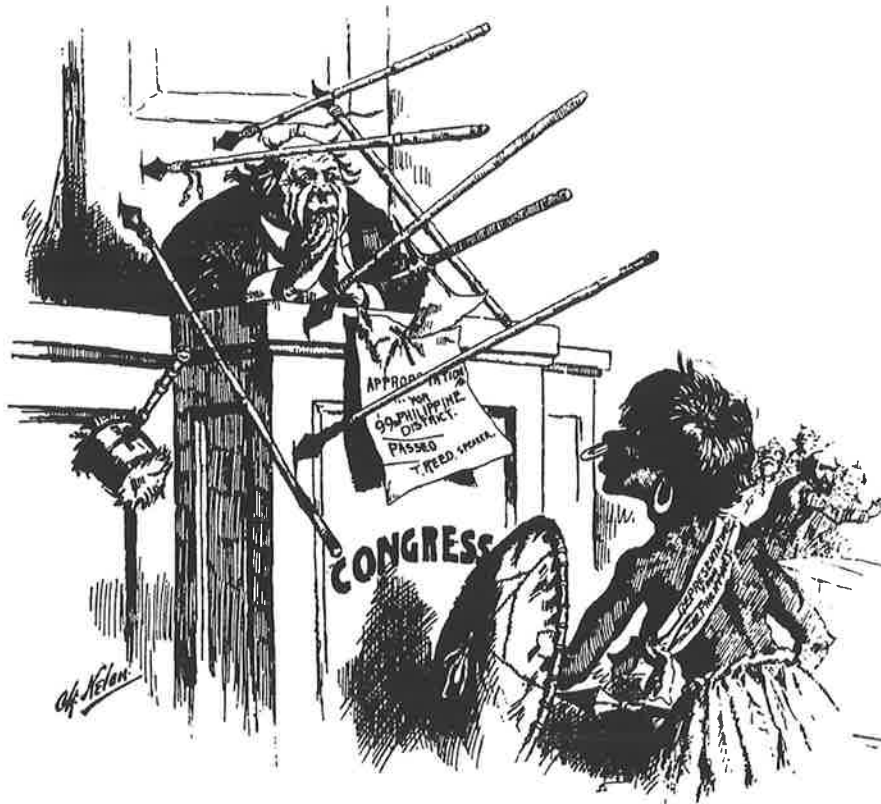
organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns...[sic] He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force this world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race he has marked the American people as his chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world.¹⁸

Indeed the task of many a modern historiography is to sift through a repertory of these imperial motives and to distinguish between momentary, political-inspired rhetoric and an underlying reason that can be independently verified as true. Thus for many scholars of America's imperial record these arguments by Beveridge, Mahan, Roosevelt, and Strong are too circumstantial and a coherent and credible reason had to be isolated through sound intellectual judgment. In the opinion of American diplomatic historian, Walter LaFeber, US imperialism no longer becomes constituted by these diverse and eclectic propositions, but is a calculated response to the pressures of its industrial revolution and the economic need for markets and materiel. It is at this point that all other reasons, strategic and military, converge.¹⁹ LaFeber is not alone in this account of imperialism, and the "economic" dimension became particularly popular in the 1960s and 70s. But as I argued in chapter 2, this tendency to reduce imperialism to a matter of delineated categories has its shortcomings since they are self-contained, self-referential, and they organize knowledge about empire as existing separately to the consciousness of the observer. More specifically they do not envision the motivations of imperialism to be complex interplays of desire; that the rhetoric used in support of American expansion usually reflects an inner unconscious will.

Just as there are difficulties in interpreting the cause of the proponents of expansionism, there are also immense complexities involved in reading its

¹⁸A.J. Beveridge quoted in Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (London: Nisbet, 1952) 61.

¹⁹Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963) 60.



“Troubles which may follow an imperial policy”

Charles Nelan, New York Herald, 1898.

As seen in this cartoon, the opposition to America's potential imperial policy were in themselves extremely prejudiced in their representations of the Filipino native. Here the cartoonist uses savage and tribal images of the natives to warn against the constitutional problems that may result from the annexation of the Philippines.

opponents' views. As a matter of fact those who claimed to be anti-imperialists at the turn of the century consisted of a very diverse lot of individuals whose dogmatic positions vacillated from an insular concern for safeguarding cherished national ideals to outright racism. In this respect the most frequently used attack against the “imperialists” was that territorial acquisition violated the spirit of American political ideals and contravened the provisions of the Constitution. These anti-imperialists perceived the United States as a very different entity from Europe and were quick to uphold the moral beneficence of its republican uniqueness and avowed refusal to use force. And since the Constitution did not provide for the acquisition of vassals and colonies, any territory annexed will have to be admitted to the “Union” with the same representational privileges as the other states. Therein lies the rub. These anti-

imperialists demonstrated very little concern for the welfare of the potential colonies, and as Beisner expounds in reference to the Philippines, “with a few exceptions, they feared not so much what U.S. imperialism would do to the various peoples of the Philippines, about whom they knew precious little, but to American ideals and institutions.”²⁰ That insularity aside the anti-imperialists were ephemeral, in some cases they applauded the annexation of Hawaii but condemned the taking of the Philippines.²¹ But more interestingly they could be ambiguous, supporting anti-imperialism for the sake of American values but also believing that colonialism would only lead to the inclusion of non-White peoples into the union, thus undermining the “purity” of America’s ethnic composition. For instance, the Prussian migrant, Carl Schurz, is recognized as one of the leading voices in the anti-imperialist movement. But his objection to the impending annexation of Santo Domingo consisted of a fear that America’s “constitutional and social integrity” would be undermined.²² This led to a “circular” logic that Santo Domingo was best left alone. Says Beisner:

This was a circular argument—a kind of permanently revolving syllogism—based upon his conception of constitutionalism, national character, race, and geography. [Schurz’s] Law went briefly as follows: the United States in order to remain true to her political principles, could never rule over other peoples undemocratically; thus, if Santo Domingo (for which in 1898 read “Hawaii,” “the Philippines,” or “Puerto Rico”) was to be annexed, it should by rights be made a state and placed on a footing of equality with Massachusetts, Georgia, California, and so forth; *but*, since the incorporation of a tropical people into the Union would destroy the very framework of American government, such a merger must at all costs be prevented; hence the only sane or desirable alternative was to leave the Dominicans “their own masters.” Annexation, in short, would either violate the Constitution or corrupt

²⁰Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898–1900* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985 [1968]) xv.

²¹Beisner x.

²²Beisner 22.

the homogeneity of the nation that was essential to orderly constitutional operation.²³

If Schurz's views were to fall back onto the central premise of US ideological superiority, then there appears to be very little difference between the views of those supporting and those against imperialism. The contention was no longer whether or not the US had a world role (a question that recurs to this day) or how it was to relate to the more "disadvantaged" peoples of the world. For indeed the US approached Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and Latin America with a mixture of condescension and missionary responsibility. The question came to be how the superiority of US culture (believed to be universally valid) was to be dispensed and what forms of power were to be used in support of this process. It comes as little surprise then that anti-imperialist views bear an uncanny similarity to those of the imperialists, as seen in this statement by one of Senator Beveridge's opponents in Congress:

The forcible annexation of the Philippine Islands is not necessary to make the United States a world power. For over ten decades our nation has been a world power. During its brief existence it has exerted upon the human race an influence more potent for good than all the other nations combined, and it has exerted that influence without the use of sword or Gatling gun. Mexico and the republics of Central and South America testify to the benign influence of our institutions, while Europe and Asia give evidence of the working of the leaven of self-government. In the growth of democracy we observe the triumphant march of an idea—an idea that would be weighted down rather than aided by the armor and weapons proffered by imperialism.²⁴

The individual behind this statement was Williams Jennings Bryan, one of the Anti-Imperialist League's most ardent supporters. But while Bryan was usually critical of many overt forms of annexation made by the US, he eventually came to favour the transfer of the Philippines to the US because, pragmatically, it was only by committing itself to a colonial policy that a possible independent Philippine republic

²³Beisner 22–23.

²⁴ William Jennings Bryan, *Bryan on Imperialism: Speeches, Newspaper Articles and Interviews* (Chicago: Bentley and Co., 1900) 23.

could be created in the future.²⁵ Bryan fell out of favour with the Anti-Imperialist League over this action, but by then the outcome of the anti-imperialist movement had become rather mixed. The US did eventually annex the Philippines and President McKinley's moral justification was the mission of "benevolent assimilation" and to provide their "little brown brothers" (as the Filipinos were called) with the right political and ideological tutelage. Thus in some respects the Philippines became the testing ground for American ideals, reaffirming the moral force both the imperialists and anti-imperialists relied on. But consequently as the US attempted to remake the Philippines in its "own image," the benevolence of the mission descended into violence that was initially structural and epistemological and eventually physical.²⁶ Sensing that the anti-Spanish rebels in the Philippines—who were so ardently allied by the US in the struggle against their erstwhile rulers—were not disbanding but turning against their new conquerors, McKinley authorized a systematic military campaign against rebel positions until they were subjugated and their leader, Aguinaldo, defeated and made to swear an oath of allegiance to the US. What was initially lionized as America's first attempt at colonial liberation thus gave way to an ironic display of aggressive colonialism ending with tragic results. This however became mediated by American calls for a practical course of action, notwithstanding the suppression of the rebellion, but because of the condescending belief that the US knew what was best for the Filipinos in the long run.

My intention in the foregoing was not to provide a history of the anti-imperialist debates or of the US administration of colonial rule in the Philippines. Rather I pointed out that what was central to such issues was the notion of the mission, around which all positions in the anti-imperialist debates converged. Hence

²⁵Thompkins 197.

²⁶For a good account see Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (New York: Random House, 1989).

both the proponents and opponents of imperialism did not have incommensurable views but were ironically unified by the idea of a superior American civilization. This episode in history is, however, not necessarily unique but fits into an evolving strategy of the mission. In the years following the second world war, the mission came to be tested by a number of historical changes. One of the most significant was the end of the British empire and the fragmentation of the world into a large number of "sovereign" nation states. Another aspect was the ascent of American social science and the corresponding rise of a different linguistic structure in which alterity and otherness was to be located. Then there was also the residual tension caused by the increasing misalignment of the other. For no longer was the basis of large-scale political difference centered around the "western world" and its periphery, but came to comprise circumstantially of shifting and undecidable entities. Therefore the other could also be the recalcitrant Gaullist French on leaving NATO, the revisionist Soviet empire, or Third world countries. In some ways this has been the result of the increasing atomization of global life where identities have become discrete and fractured. Finally, further moral transformations have reified certain mechanisms through which moral choices are made. For imperialism, its most physical manifestation and nuances of violence and domination, has come to be recognized as an ultimate evil, and its antonym, self-determination, has become valorized. The use of power was deemed bad, but then was justifiable in a situation where the "balance of power" stood to be challenged.

The presumed disappearance of imperialism (as a label for the conduct of US foreign policy) since the second world war is largely attributed to these historical changes. When the Philippines was finally granted independence in 1945, the advocates of its annexation (if they were still alive then) must have felt vindicated. Even if the Filipino polity were to eventually degenerate into the mismanagement

and horrors of the Marcos regime, the Philippines came to be conveniently remembered as a US foreign policy success only because imperialism lost its conceptual utility (q.v.) under the weight of the cold war and the evolving international political system.²⁷ What was now in fashion were terms like the international balance of power, bipolarity, the three worlds system, and more problematically, the so-called superpower politics. It is also important to remember that under this mantle of neologisms and in very select circles, imperialism remained a potent mobilizing concept. As mentioned earlier the 1960s and 70s saw a resurgence in its use as anti-Vietnam war protestors and sympathetic intellectuals mounted a sustained campaign against the mainstream American society that had pummeled the nation into the war. But far from using the same understanding of imperialism as their turn-of-the-century counterparts, imperialism had become interpolated with increasing awareness of the non-American world and a self-reflexive consciousness about how it consisted of different forms of violence. There were a number of monuments to this new anti-imperialism, not least the striking parallels between the textual and material conditions of the times. Thus many of the sources I have used regarding the anti-imperialist movement of 1898–1920 were published at that period of time. The undertaking of reprinting 52 volumes of (what may now be called) primary texts printed on US imperialism between 1898 and 1941 by the Hoover Institution, Arno Press and the New York Times is also another

²⁷It must be remembered that Marcos was hailed by a number of US presidents, especially Ronald Reagan, for his commitment to “liberty, democracy, justice, equality.” There is no doubt about the dubiousness of such assertions and that keeping the Philippines as an ally was of strategic importance during the cold war. But this exemplifies the overwhelming prioritization made by US policymakers in downplaying the initial values of the mission (like democracy) for what was perceived as more urgent political problems of the day. See Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

example of such parallels.²⁸ But more significantly there was also growing appreciation that imperialism had to be seen as something of a larger scope, as evidenced in Felix Greene's *The Enemy*:

And it became clear to me, as it has of course to so many others, that imperialism means far more than the exploitation of poor countries by the rich. It involves a whole social system based on exploitation and violence, a whole way of thinking about other people. The ghettos of America, racial injustices, the glaring inequalities that exist in every Western country, the dehumanization of our industrial society, are as much products of imperialism as apartheid in South Africa or the wanton slaughter of villagers in Vietnam.²⁹

Greene indeed demonstrates a critical awareness of the many dimensions imperialism may possess. But like many of the earlier anti-imperialist texts *The Enemy* does not elaborate what problems imperialism may present in itself or demonstrate any immediate concern for the victims of that imperialism. Rather it rationalizes anti-imperialism on the basis of the dangers US imperialism twinned with capitalist needs would bring to American society, particularly in being self-destructive and leading the US into fascism and social degeneration.³⁰

Imperialism, therefore, possesses an incredible amount of resilience not only across historical but temporal settings as well. Even the internal intellectual and academic projects to isolate the cause of imperialism vary little in terms of the scope of contestation. Thus for US, Britain, and France, the arguments have shifted from capitalism to modernization and from the strategic to the religious. My intention here is not to support any one of these arguments but to suggest that this contestation is in itself enveloped by imperialism. The case of the United States is extremely useful

²⁸Various authors, *American Imperialism: Viewpoints of United States Foreign Policy*, 52 vols. (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1970).

²⁹Felix Greene, *The Enemy: What Every American Should Know About Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971) xiii; see also 101.

³⁰Greene's accusations of fascism need to be qualified. He sees this as the "imperialism without the social-democratic 'liberal' mask which the 'satisfied' colony-owning imperialisms are able to assume. Fascism involves repression. It serves the interest of monopoly capitalism which, through demagoguery, acquires a mass base." Greene 89-90.

because it harbours such a deep-seated longing to be identified by the rest of the world as a nation different from Europe in terms of moral consciousness, domestic polity, and use of power. Yet every attempt to inculcate that difference has been accompanied by a sense of superiority that has led to a violent export of its “unique” mission that is circular and ambivalent. It is circular because every attempt to either support or oppose imperialism usually returns to a pre-given dogma. For example, while the mission appeared to be buried by globalizing terms of realist IR discourse, scholars like Tony Smith have recently returned to the language of the mission. Writing in *America's Mission*, Smith fears that so many texts in US foreign policy have been preoccupied by the strategic narratives of cold war that it is now vital to revive “democracy” as a means of re-reading the American diplomatic record.³¹ Smith's writing is almost celebratory but he also inadvertently fractures and misaligns contemporary understandings of US foreign policy; he appropriates the earlier forms of imperial mission without necessarily abandoning later understandings of international relations.

Transition: Theories of American Uniqueness?

Thus far this chapter has concerned itself with the imperial mission and in particular the circularity and ambivalence associated with its appropriation by the United States in the twentieth century. There are a few aspects of this that need to be discussed. How does one locate US imperialism as being both unique and also part of a larger history of western domination and violence? What is the relationship between the US attempt to construct moral difference and its ultimate use of political power? And where does international relations situate in this picture?

³¹Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Without a doubt mainstream American society prefers to consider itself as different from Europe. In literature, political speeches, and popular culture, the US has referred to itself invariably as “God’s own country,” “city on the hill,” “land of the free,” and “the melting pot.” Certainly the list of self-given accolades goes on as contemporary discourse works to further reify an American “civilization” distinct from the repressive and tyrannical ways of Europe. This exceptionalism has manifested itself in countless ways and for international relations this has come through the creation of the social sciences whose positivism and objectivism attempts to steer clear of the deductive, hermeneutical styles of European humanities. Greg Russell’s attempt to separate American from continental IR is one good example. While unlike Stanley Hoffmann, Russell does not singularly acclaim IR as an American discipline he nonetheless works within that attitude. To Russell, continental or European realist IR’s central premise was “*raison d’état*” or the purpose of the state as being the ultimate ends in the execution of international political power.³² Thus what one finds in Europe especially during the pre-first world war years and the interregnum were opaque and secretive diplomatic interactions whose conduct borrowed heavily from the classical doctrines of Thucydides, Hobbes, and Machiavelli. In most cases *realpolitik* overwhelmingly justified the use of power. Russell however finds European *raison d’état* as not precisely applicable in realist American IR because the question of morality consistently foreshadows the use of international power. For example, Hans Morgenthau, a German émigré and notably one of the chief figures of American IR, is shown by Russell to possess views

³²Gregory T. Russell, *Raison D’État and the American Philosophy of Realism in World Affairs*, diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1987. (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989). See also Greg Russell, *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

vacillating between the primacy of power and national interest and the possibilities of moral restraint.³³

Russell does not necessarily explain the obsession with morality in American IR nor does he qualify the subsistence between morality and power. While this seems to feed on the intrinsic and self-explanatory basis of the US being a different society and thus dissimilar intellectual views, it is Russell's PhD advisor, Cecil Crabb, who tries to reconcile these conceptual incongruities through a unique American philosophy. In a word this philosophical system is called pragmatism. Although very few works (apart from Crabb's) have been written about American pragmatism and international relations, this philosophy has appeared in other areas, culminating with the works of William James, Charles Pierce, John Dewey, and much later, Richard Rorty. A few general points have to be made about pragmatism especially with regard to its acclamation as "America's most original and influential contribution to the philosophical tradition."³⁴ It is seen to be an intellectual project filling the need of the "innovatively" new US society for a commonsensical approach in the inquiry of truth. Pragmatism's purpose, therefore, was to avoid the "abstract philosophical speculation" associated with European philosophy but to valorize the realm of experience as the way truth could be revealed.³⁵ Consequently the universe is perceived as incomplete and pluralistic, leading to the presence of competing thoughts and societies. Since pragmatism is utilitarian and oriented towards problem solving it has, therefore, a number of political implications. First staying close to the doctrines of the Enlightenment and modernity, it upholds humankind's relentless capacity for self-improvement. Second it rejects "closed" or deterministic systems like

³³Russell, *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft*.

³⁴Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., *American Diplomacy and the Pragmatic Tradition* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1989) 53.

³⁵Crabb 84.

Social Darwinism or Marxism and embraces “open” systems like liberal democracy.³⁶ This is because it is only under these systems that the search for truth can best be facilitated. Similarly it opposes “ ‘value-free’ scientific and philosophical enquiries.”³⁷

Crabb argues that US international relations is actually consonant with pragmatic philosophy especially in the way choices are made and prioritized and also the manner with which the world is conceived. If the presence of an “open” world system were vital to the pursuit of truth, then much of the moral basis of IR would be dedicated to the promotion of that system. The use of power, in this regard, becomes extremely problematic because even though there is a general dislike for it, power is recognized not as a means to an end or used for its own sake. Instead it must serve a higher and justifiable purpose. Thus for John Dewey power is “man’s ability or capability to execute, realize ends” and is the “sum of conditions available for bringing the desired end into existence.”³⁸ In a similar vein William James sees power as legitimate so long as it is justified in the long run. In “the Moral Equivalent of War,” particularly, James sanctions the use of war when the higher and more immediate moral standard such as national security left few other choices.³⁹ For example, facing complex circumstances like the need to decisively end the war in the Pacific Theatre, the nuances of pragmatism could be felt in the use of atomic weapons on Japan because, as overbearing as such an action was, it was believed that the costs involved were minimal compared to the further loss of lives had the war

³⁶John Dewey, “Philosophy and Democracy,” *John Dewey*, eds. Debra Moris and Ian Shapiro (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1993) 43–47.

³⁷Crabb 84–86.

³⁸Crabb 111.

³⁹William James, “The Moral Equivalent of War,” *The Works of William James*, eds. Frederick H. Burkhardt et al. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982) 162.

continued. Because the making of moral and rationalistic choices has become internalized as a necessity in US society, these pragmatic moves become blatantly acceptable without any awareness of its logocentric myopia. I shall revisit this problem of power and morality in my later discussion of Reinhold Niebuhr.

For now, despite these attempts to construct these philosophical positions and practical/theoretical notions of IR as different from European forms, there is an inordinate amount of intertwining that makes it impossible to deny the Euro-American connection or to separate the pragmatism as absolutely unique. At one level, pragmatism appears to be a very celebratory, distinct, and political move to construct an American intellectual identity upon which social practices could be explained or verified. At another delineated level the hybrid behaviour of American IR appears difficult to reconcile. For instance one may ask how US foreign policy can comprise of both very liberal and optimistic views of the world (the possibility of progress, the importance of exporting American ideals and values) as well as the constant return to realist power politics. With the introduction of structuralism into IR in the 1960s this separation becomes even more acute, making the dynamics and functioning of the international world outside the control of contingent human intervention.⁴⁰ This is where it is important to recall the concepts of disjuncture and ambivalence discussed in the previous chapters. Since all rationalistic forms of thinking derive from delineation, the question about uniqueness in American thought becomes discrete and atomistic. It attempts to reinforce the notion that such categories like the United States, Europe, colonialism, independence, international relations, domestic politics, human agency, and external structure have to be held separate from each other. This is thus the driving force behind contemporary exertions of difference, superiority, and exceptionalism. As I stressed delineated

modes of thinking are problematic in that they fail to take into consideration that these categories are part of an imperfect network of connections slipping, bypassing, and converging at different moments. It is important to think of American IR as disjunctive; while it is produced in reaction to changing worldly conditions and underpinned by different philosophical concerns there are still aspects that connect it back to a larger and more coherent system of western domination.

What materializes as difference in this connection—difference from Europe, difference from the “rest of the world”—is also a feature of the ambivalent economy of desire. As I have argued in the previous chapter a number of critics have stressed that cultural production cannot be delineated from the desire implicit in individual psychological processes. This desire is not merely a general wish or longing but an unconscious identificational need with respect to the other. It is at this site that ambivalence develops because this desire forms a consonant split between the attraction and repulsion to the other. Similarly this relation to the other returns to the subject in the form of a narcissistic/self-hate divide, for in both attraction and repulsion, the longing to subsume cannot and must not be fulfilled if the subject is to retain his psychological integrity. Cast in a broader setting social desire comes to double the self-other relations that lie at the heart of colonial discourse, articulating a panoply of imperial actions including: the desire to subsume the colonial other as self but the impossibility of doing so, the function of textual and metonymic processes as attempts to satisfy that desire and to assuage tensions associated with that ambivalence. The “impossibility” of desire becomes a helpful element in the discussion of disjuncture because it exemplifies how discrepant entities could also be part of a more coherent action. JanMohamed’s “Manichean Allegory” picks up so much of this feature of desire because, for him, the material, textual, and physical

⁴⁰See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia

realms are all a part of a multifaceted colonial strategy that is both conscious and unconscious. In light of the pragmatic assertions of US IR, the ambivalent economy of desire produces a number of readings. First pragmatism can be held as a separate philosophical doctrine insofar as it is used as one of the many hermeneutical models. But in the larger scheme of things the cultural space it appears to afford to international relations (IR having both an American and European "flavour") reiterates the internal psychical conflict. On the one hand the desire to be distinct and unique is wrapped up in fantasies of the other (in this case Europe). On the other hand the need to produce a universally valid form of international relations is also dependent on the avoidance of value free science and celebration of a particularistic American version of that discipline. These are not ironies in themselves but expressions of US cultural desire. Second these questions of American intellectual uniqueness are in themselves complex issues vacillating between worldly conditions of US hegemonic power and its own assertions of being non-imperialistic. In this respect this intellectual position mirrors America's own position of global supremacy today and yet whether or not the US should be understood as a "post-colonial" state remains a largely contestable notion.⁴¹ This split confuses America's assumption of the imperial mantle with its anti-colonial intellectualism. To a large extent this is underwritten by the economy of desire that again echoes the production of difference that incorporates both self and other.

Writing America's Empire

During America's ascent to global hegemony in the twentieth century, history, conceptions of morality, the role of American ideals and values, and the deployment

University Press, 1959): 80–123.

⁴¹See Peter Hulme, "Including America," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 26.1 (1995): 117–123.

of power have cast an ambivalent shadow over the textual expressions of US imperialism. As evidenced in the surreptitious and periodic intrusion of "imperialism" in public discourse, the changing interpretations of empire do not adhere to a seamless eschatological progression where they are gradually "written out" as aberrations of humanity or any moral order. As a matter of fact the increasing moral scrutiny placed on imperialism constantly returns to a number of themes about the "mission," the universal ideals of American democracy, self-determination, liberalism, and freedom. Whether or not such themes are emancipatory is disputable considering the violent means associated with their propagation in places that were former colonies of Europe. The delineation between emancipation on the one hand and the use of political might on the other is not distinct but claimed by pragmatic philosophers to be a form of ambivalence in US foreign policy making characteristic of a unique American society. The point here is not so much to deny that pragmatism helps to account for that ambivalence but also to suggest that such reasoning fits into the larger picture of disjuncture. Thus the morals that US society honours is part of the same discursive system as the violent use of power that it excoriates. What is claimed to be distinctively "American" comes to subsist with European practices of imperialism activating a myriad of psychological forces projected onto the social realm.

If the textual production of America's empire were to be assayed, it would surely have to come via such themes of ambivalence. As quoted at the start of the chapter these two seminal figures in international relations appear to be consciously elaborating a split in the practice of imperialism, that in the first case, individuals could be morally self-aware but also imperialistic when located as part of a social collective, and in the second, how the opposition to imperialism could also lead to it. There are undoubtedly more of these ideas in the writings of IR and this is the

ground that has to be covered with respect to twentieth century colonial discourse. This is because the American empire is chiefly constituted through IR as US perceptions of the world are derived from a larger cultural system that also produces the discourse of world politics. And just as the trajectory of imperialism has never been static, the development of American IR since the second world war has also been dynamic, shifting from a largely explanatory and historicist model to one that aspires to be scientific and positivist. Scattered along this “teleological” line is an eclectic group of writers like Reinhold Neibuhr, Hans Morgenthau, and George Liska.⁴² There are many more IR intellectuals but I have chosen these to demonstrate the presence of circular, insular, and ambivalent inflections of imperialism. What unifies them is how they are situated within the American imperial mission. Thus in spite of the difference in their time frames, objectives, and explanatory models, in one way or another, their writings revolve around as well as constitute the mission that is specifically coterminous with moral conduct. In this sense morality is not just the consciousness of good versus evil but a whole ethical system governing and legitimizing the totality of social life. In Levinasian terms such ethics is considered responsibility for the Other.”⁴³ The morality question takes hold at every level of agency, moving from the morality of individuals within a society to the morality of each society within a larger social collectivity like the international realm. Imperialism seeps into American IR because these notions of morality form the basis of inquiry about how sovereign states relate to each other. No doubt IR perceives the

⁴²There is an interesting coincidence that many of the early American IR scholars were either German in origin or of German parentage. Neibuhr for instance was a son of a German immigrant and Morgenthau arrived in US after fleeing the Nazi occupied Germany. An unempirical observation suggests that the IR theory they produced was a combination of some cultural displacement, a sense of “exile” (and yet patriotism for their new found homeland), and the continental philosophies they were influenced by. This is, of course, purely speculative and much more work could be done in this area.

⁴³Emmanuel Levinas, “Ethics as First Philosophy,” *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seàn Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 82–84.

interaction of states as technically regulated by “natural laws,” yet there is a predilection for morality as a basis upon which interstate behaviour is analyzed. True, these IR theorists do see numerable differences between individual and interstate morality, and also question if individual morals could be applied to international relations. And to a large extent this separation becomes a convenient way of justifying imperialism, the use of power, and other forms of intervention without necessarily compromising individual moral standards.

In surveying these questions of the moral mission, the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr would be the best place to begin. After all, an important realist IR figure, George Kennan, gave Niebuhr the honorific title, “father of us all,”⁴⁴ indicating the pervasiveness of his thought in the American IR literature. But more so because of the way his writings justify and legitimize the use of US imperial power while simultaneously reconciling with the strictures of US moral beliefs. As a theologian, Niebuhr's route to IR has been comparatively less direct, although his writings on the individual's relationship to Christendom paralleled pressing political developments like America's foray into the second world war, its rise to global predominance, the onset of the cold war, and nuclearization.⁴⁵ Niebuhr's work is therefore worldly because of a growing need to account for the relationship between individual morality and an increasingly chaotic, anarchic, and immoral world. The result of which is a form of writing that is best called “prophetic realism”⁴⁶ in which Christian views of human nature are twinned with the unalterably deterministic and conflicting course of social life. As such the Niebuhr who extols the US employment of power politics on the one hand cannot easily be reconciled with the Niebuhr who upholds

⁴⁴George F. Kennan quoted in Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1986) 99.

⁴⁵Smith 113–114.

⁴⁶Smith 99–133.

the intrinsic good in the individual. And although there are a number of shifts in his ideas across his life, the disjuncture between the individual and the society and between good and evil is a recurring feature. In *Moral Man and Immoral Society* Niebuhr accepts the inevitability of conflict, selfishness, and immorality of society and criticizes liberals and “utopians” for their “romantic overestimate of human virtue.”⁴⁷ As he intones:

It may be possible, though it is never easy, to establish just relations between individuals within a group purely by moral and rational suasion and accommodation. In inter-group relations this is practically an impossibility. The relations between groups must therefore always be predominantly political rather than ethical, that is, they will be determined by the proportion of power which each group possesses at least as much as by any rational and moral appraisal of the comparative needs and claims of each group.⁴⁸

But Niebuhr's assertions are more complex and ambivalent as individual expressions of morality are wrapped up in the social and external production of immorality. As Niebuhr upholds individual loyalty towards nations can be considered a “high form of altruism” but paradoxically contributes to some of the most egregious and self-serving behaviour in international society. Thus this loyalty to the state

becomes the vehicle of all the altruistic impulses and expresses itself, on occasion, with such fervor that the critical attitude of the individual toward the nation and its enterprises is almost completely destroyed. The unqualified character of this devotion is the very basis of the nation's power and of the freedom to use the power without moral restraint. Thus the unselfishness of individuals makes for the selfishness of nations.⁴⁹

This notion about the ambivalent moral positioning of the individual is more developed in his later works. In *The Nature and Destiny of Man* the conflicting sides between “moral man” and “immoral society” becomes integrated into the individual. The difference between the individual and society, as far as moral actions are

⁴⁷Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* xx.

⁴⁸Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* xxii–xxiii.

⁴⁹Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* 91.

concerned, is therefore slight.⁵⁰ Here Niebuhr considers human beings to consist in a duality; on the one hand the individual can have a God-like nature and is capable of self-transcendence, but on the other he also has an earthly, sinful nature.⁵¹ In a larger social setting this duality is now an affective characteristic of two positions on social behaviour, a grouping that he divides between the “children of light” and the “children of darkness.”⁵² What remains fairly consistent in Niebuhr’s thought is the persistence of sin and social conflict and his disagreement with the liberal doctrines on the perfectibility of man. In this respect these two groupings become a platform on which Niebuhr arrives at an undecidable juncture. Certainly he rejects the optimism of the “children of light” in their belief in the possibility of a “moral community” and he dismisses them as foolish. In spite of the negative connotation of the “children of darkness” Niebuhr admires their worldly and self-serving nature, as they are more aware of the “realities” of the social political order. Niebuhr’s theological background refuses to accept the latter as the ultimate ends of social behaviour and seeks somehow to integrate aspects of the two.

In the face of a rapidly changing international politics after the second world war, an intellectual void was present in US society as to how the complexities of the world “out there” could best be interpreted alongside American moral beliefs. To a large extent Niebuhr’s writings filled this void in providing a way of ordering concepts like empires and nation states as well as establishing a means of understanding the moral implications of their interactions. By so doing he creates a sense of international order that consists in a relationship that tracks the moral

⁵⁰Smith 107.

⁵¹Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation* 2 vols. (London: Nisbet, 1945 and 1948).

⁵²Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of its Traditional Defence* (London: Nisbet, 1945).

dissensions in the individual and society at large. At one level there can be a discernible difference between the moral possibilities of individuals and inescapability of immorality within the community. But at another level the duality of good and evil within the individual also makes for the possibilities of nation states. First, under such a consideration, something like American power or the idea of the US as empire becomes justifiable as a contingent feature of the nation state. For Niebuhr the nation state as “the human group of strongest social cohesion, of most undisputed central authority and of the most clearly defined membership”⁵³ is thus the precise social collectivity that can tangibly be realized as the embodiment of immorality: selfishness, greed, conflict, and war. Niebuhr does not reconcile the tension between the moral possibilities of the individual and the evils of the state, but uses this dichotomy to denigrate the liberal preference for institutional or peaceful methods of conflict resolution. But since the prevailing evils of the state are believed to be a pre-existing fact of life, moralistic choices not unlike those of pragmatism will have to be made. Niebuhr sees no alternative but to meet power with power by saying “when collective power, whether in the form of imperialism or class domination, exploits weakness, it can never be dislodged unless power is raised against it.”⁵⁴ Second Niebuhr’s conception of the society or community (a grouping of individuals) becomes the platform on which an uncertain attitude towards imperialism is observed.

Writing in *The Structure of Nations and Empires* Niebuhr presents yet another perspective on the duality and dilemma of human morals. Unlike his other writings this book appears to be less philosophically speculative and more documentary and

⁵³Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* 83.

⁵⁴Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* xii.

analytical.⁵⁵ In effect it directly addresses an audience that is concerned with the global problems of community life as it is impinged by the nuclear arms race. At first glance *The Structure of Nations and Empires* seems to have a more social science appeal as Niebuhr styles it as a study on the ahistorical and recurring patterns in the ordering of communities and dominions. From the classical times to the present and from the western empires to the Islamic and Chinese, Niebuhr weaves in a sense of an international world that is caught between an unchangeable human nature and an ever-reforming vision of how communities should be structured. For example the concept of empire and the deployment of imperial power appears to be a perennial phenomenon, but Niebuhr prefers to deduce differences among them, noting in particular the differences between abandoned imperialism and the existence of new “forms of supra-national communities.”⁵⁶ It is this premise that allows Niebuhr to provide the context (the late 1950s) of this work, comparing the American Empire with that of the Soviet Union. However in doing so the author locates *The Structure of Nations and Empires* in the same philosophical stance as many of his preceding texts, creating a zone in which an ambiguous morality is recognized as the only “safe way of building communities.”⁵⁷ For Niebuhr the establishment of communities is an inevitability of human life and every community has its own internal mechanism that provide for cohesion such as the power of central authority or some other contrived universalism.⁵⁸ To this concept Niebuhr intimates that the “dominion” is the embarrassing outgrowth of community that colludes with authority in promoting a

⁵⁵Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959).

⁵⁶Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires* 7.

⁵⁷Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires* 293.

⁵⁸Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires* 33–48.

self-interest that flies in the face of man's moral sensibilities.⁵⁹ Such distinctions are necessary because they linguistically allow Niebuhr to empirically situate empires; and he argues that as an attempt by an aggrandizing "parochial community" to create a dominion over others empires have never in history succeeded in truly building cohesive communities within their dominions.⁶⁰

Whether or not Niebuhr believes imperialism to be a moral travesty is another story altogether, as he avers to his ambivalent stance on the necessity of nature and the possibility to goodness. In his conclusion Niebuhr recapitulates his objection to various ideas of the times. He sees that man is ironically trapped between nature and freedom, and it is through the latter that he can transcend the former. Yet freedom, where man acquires the ability to "harness the forces of nature in the world and to transmute the natural appetites and drives in his own nature,"⁶¹ possesses as much destructive potential as it does creative. To a large extent it is the nuclear problem that Niebuhr alludes to. But this also refers to the contravening ideas of liberal democracy and Marxist theories whose failure to offer explanation for the existence of supranational communities that also highlights the tension of man's preternatural side. For Niebuhr liberal democracy posits too optimistic a view of the cooperative and pacific potential of communities while Marxism's utopian anti-imperialism revalidates another form of universalism.⁶² In a sense Niebuhr's own feelings are to call for an admixture between a realist worldliness and the possibility of morality not unlike the views articulated in *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*. By arriving at this position the idea of the United States as empire becomes obscure and

⁵⁹Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires* 33.

⁶⁰Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires* 66.

⁶¹Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires* 287.

⁶²Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires* 217–238.

ambivalent. In many cases Niebuhr is concerned that America's power disposition alone makes the country poised for imperialism, as it cannot escape the "natural" forces of world politics that relentlessly compels it towards that direction. *The Structure of Nations and Empires* provides no way out of that conundrum, and even as Niebuhr is comparatively less analytical of the US than of other dominions in history the indecisiveness about US power and imperialism exacerbates the matter. In a sense Niebuhr's blending of a moral community and the inevitability of power has already prewritten into the US a disjunctive way of casting doubt about America's world role without absolving it from its current position of global hegemony.

Without a doubt the moral concerns and usability of imperial force articulated by Niebuhr is an inflection that resonates in the more "strictly" IR literature and is a theme to which American IR returns constantly. One good example of the legacy of Niebuhr and of the residual nature of the mission is Hans J. Morgenthau, perhaps one of the most cited scholars in mainstream international relations. His most commemorated work, *Politics Among Nations* remains a classic text in IR that is still read and continues to be edited and revised posthumously by Kenneth Thompson. Yet his association with Niebuhr remains under explored and is also interpreted in varying ways, for instance, by the US policy machinery as a guide to the conduct of American power overseas, and by critical IR theorists as a symbol of the entrenchment of the discipline in the strictures of modernity and positivism. However, Morgenthau, like Niebuhr, remains more complex since his work straddles across a number of disjunctures; at one level it is a praxeological desire and faith in American ideals—the need for an effective US foreign policy in a pre-given anarchic world—that drives his views of international relations. At another level Morgenthau comes across as restrained by the need to locate morality in IR, thus offsetting the strictness of power politics. And yet at another level there is the Morgenthau who

aspires towards scientific and conceptual rigour upon which all inquisitions of the world must follow.⁶³ It may then be somewhat erroneous to conceive of Morgenthau as a strict practitioner of power politics. More appropriately he fits comfortably within the same mission that has produced so much debate between the imperialists and the anti-imperialists, and now between the realists and the liberals. Perhaps the subtitle of *Politics Among Nations*, "The Struggle for Power and Peace," neatly highlights this ambivalence.

If the first chapter of *Politics Among Nations*, "A Realist Theory of International Politics," is considered the defining chapter of that book, then it is also the same where Morgenthau's sense of the mission resides. Here he provides six principles on which realist IR must be grounded. The first three exemplify a yearning positivism that is tempered with an uneasy determinism of human nature. First he insists it is possible to ascertain "objective laws" derived from human nature and that these laws shape politics and society.⁶⁴ Second the key concept from which all inquiry of IR must flow is "interest defined in terms of power."⁶⁵ Third he goes on to circumscribe the laws surrounding "interest" as objective and universally valid but also unfixed and changing.⁶⁶ These principles are curiously opposed by three further principles involving the moral consequences of political action. Thus the anarchic and self-serving nature of collective human nature that he implies is also conscious of the irreconcilability between the needs for "successful political action" and the moral imperative.⁶⁷ In fact Morgenthau claims that political realism does not make any

⁶³Morgenthau, see esp. chapter 2.

⁶⁴Morgenthau 4-5.

⁶⁵Morgenthau 5-10.

⁶⁶Morgenthau 10-12.

⁶⁷Morgenthau 12.

moral decisions and it would be dangerous to assume that either positions predominate:

[Political realism] is unwilling to gloss over and obliterate that tension and thus to obfuscate both the moral and the political issue by making it appear as though the stark facts of politics were morally more satisfying than they actually are, and the moral law less exacting than it actually is.⁶⁸

More pointedly this causes a Neibuhrian separation between “universal moral principles” and the immediate moral requirements of the state. Under this principle he goes on to state that a “universal” moral idea like liberty has different consequences, because for the individual self-sacrifice for that value is possible in contrast to the necessity of survival. Writes Morgenthau, “the state has no right to let its moral disapprobation of the infringement of liberty get in the way of successful political action, itself inspired by the moral principle of national survival.”⁶⁹ The following two principles then flow from this point, one stressing on the refusal of conflating the moral laws of the state with those of the universe, and the other declaring the difference between realism and other schools of IR thought is the former’s practical and profound combination of moral and realistic views of the world.⁷⁰

These views of political realism are considered incommensurable insofar as the concerns about morality, presumed laws of interstate behaviour, and the need for accurate and objective description cannot easily be reconciled with each other. In other segments of *Politics Among Nations*, the tension between the American missionary or moral angst and the desire for historically precise form of knowledge validation produces ambivalent interpretations of power and imperialism. These interpretations are subtle forms of linguistic control where precise definitions are

⁶⁸Morgenthau 12.

⁶⁹Morgenthau 12; see also 244.

sought in the name of conceptual utility. Thus Morgenthau claims that political power, for instance, is too broad a term for the scientific claims of IR and as such requires a rigorous system of definition and differentiation. Consequently he makes four distinctions, between power and influence, power and force, usable and unusable power, and legitimate and illegitimate power.⁷¹ The nuances between them are only very slight but the internal justifications made by Morgenthau seem compelling. For instance power is absolute while influence is more of “persuasion,”⁷² force is the “actual exercise of physical violence,”⁷³ usable and unusable power are instruments of policy (like threat of the use of nuclear weapons) that can rationally lead to success,⁷⁴ and legitimate power is something that has to be “morally or legally” justifiable.⁷⁵ Morgenthau does not explain why such distinctions have to be made save the presumption that the basis of a scientific IR relies on such forms of analyses. But in the larger scheme of things these distinctions form the point at which moral concerns, the American uncertainty in the use of power, and the social sciences converge. It is important to note that much like the six principles of political realism these ideas of power are also separated into two. With the latter portion, usable/unusable power, legitimate/illegitimate power providing a utilitarian as well as moralistic for the legitimizing of US power. Similarly Morgenthau's definition of imperialism goes through the same pseudo-empirical scrutiny and moralistic testing. He claims that because imperialism has become so value laden and polemical a

⁷⁰Morgenthau 13–16.

⁷¹Morgenthau 32–37.

⁷²Morgenthau 33.

⁷³Morgenthau 33.

⁷⁴Morgenthau 33–34.

⁷⁵Morgenthau 34.

concept, it “has lost all concrete meaning”⁷⁶ and in particular tries to disclaim that not all exertions of power can be considered imperialistic. Hence relying on the preferred interpretation of imperialism as physical and formal territorial control Morgenthau says that there are three misconceptions. First, not every act sought by a nation in expanding its power is imperialism.⁷⁷ Second, not every foreign policy action used to sustain a pre-existing empire is imperialism.⁷⁸ Third economic reasons are not enough in explaining imperialism because empires existed long before the advent of the modern capitalist system.⁷⁹ Facing these challenges, Morgenthau prefers the concept ground of “status quo,” or the preservation of an international distribution of power system at any point in history.⁸⁰ To him, then, imperialism is any action that threatens to disrupt the status quo and an imperialist power is similarly any entity behind such behaviours. Since the very language of IR is structured in such a way that the US (and even its allies in Europe) are always represented to be on the side of the status quo, it is difficult for the label of imperialism to be applied to Morgenthau’s realism. Instead imperialism now is equated with revisionism and states like 17/18th century Britain, Russia, Nazi Germany, and the USSR become identified as imperialist powers. One may argue that such strategies all too conveniently absolve the US of any imperial guilt for the want of theoretical precision. Without a doubt Morgenthau believed that he was being as objective as possible, which is interesting considering that in process of this intellectual pragmatism he unconsciously replicates the ambivalence of the mission,

⁷⁶Morgenthau 58.

⁷⁷Morgenthau 59.

⁷⁸Morgenthau 59–61.

⁷⁹Morgenthau 61–67.

⁸⁰Morgenthau 53.

disclaiming American involvement in imperialism in one way but reinforcing its participation in another.

The fluid and vacillating nature of American imperialism contained within the classical and hermeneutical realist tradition of Niebuhr and Morgenthau underwent some transformation by the late 1960s and 1970s. These changes took place largely in the realm of methodology where there was an increasing preference to turn away from the historicist and morally uncertain speculation of IR and to implement an observation of global politics that is not encumbered by the observing subject. In other words it borrowed heavily from social sciences the notion that international phenomena existed outside human language and consciousness. At one extreme delineated entities like systems, wholes, structures, and agencies afforded a number of IR scholars to venture into the realm of mathematics and statistics. But a more prominent or mainstream core came to rely on an admixture of larger scale ahistorical/universal theoretical principles (constants) with smaller historically changing structures (variables), stressing that historical phenomena were repetitive and yet also dynamic. Writers using these modes of analysis do not deny the existence of moral questions such as imperialism and the use of power but precisely employ such forms of empiricism to sidestep such concerns. This results in the division of imperialism into two objects, the first as an instance of observable (a)historical phenomena compelling a need for social analysis, and the second as an aspect of collective human conscience lying outside IR. However, where IR stands with respect to this delineation is more uncertain because the discipline's immanent concerns about being a social science precludes its original objective, which is to have a transformative potential on society on the whole.

One IR scholar who demonstrates this is George Liska. While already located in the realist paradigm Liska's writing shows a considerable amount of interest in the

topic of US imperialism that does not easily reconcile the ambivalence between imperialism as a social science object and as a moral dilemma. While most of his texts concern themselves with questions like how American expansionism could be conceptualized or how US imperialism could be compared to historical patterns, Liska tacitly celebrates US imperialism as a rational symbol of American cultural greatness and moral restraint. Two works must therefore be considered, *Imperial America: The International Politics of Primacy* and *The Career of Empire*.⁸¹ Written approximately a decade apart from each other both texts represent the subtle theoretical revisions afforded by the social sciences without a corresponding shift in the attitudes towards empire or without necessarily being embedded in a changing moral discourse. Liska's work is thus disjunctive because his work overtly foregrounds American imperialism as an objective, value-free aspect of social sciences, locating it within a larger historical framework while the moral and historical implications of imperialism clutters his text undecidedly as something that he is ironically both conscious and unconscious about.

Written under the shadow of the Vietnam war, Liska's *Imperial America* demonstrates such tendencies, which is tersely captured by Robert Osgood's reading as advocating the US as an imperial but not imperialistic nation. The subtlety of this language play begins at Liska's surmising that IR is a compound of two entities, the politics of nation states as a consequence of formal decolonization in Africa and Asia and the "politics of empire and interempire relations."⁸² He mentions that these two forms of politics are difficult to distinguish from each other and the sole reliance on past European models of imperial politics was insufficient. Yet such statements belie

⁸¹George Liska, *Imperial America: The International Politics of Primacy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967); and *The Career of Empire: America and Imperial Expansion Over Land and Sea* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

⁸²Liska, *Imperial America* 3.

a more uncertain and nostalgic attitude about how the ahistoricity of the social sciences and the historicity of current events co-functioned with the image of the US as both a nation state and empire. *Imperial America* does not resolve this tension but in effect exacerbates it. For instance Liska appropriates the term "empire" as having closer affinity to the Roman or classical empires of antiquity than to Euro-colonial systems during the last few centuries. In practicality Liska finds US external behaviour in global politics of the late 1960s to be aspects of empire, paralleling episodes of US expansionism, the adoption of an activist (as opposed to isolationist) foreign policy, the accumulation of vast power resources, the competition with the USSR, and the waging of "imperial wars" to be all akin to the contest between Rome and Macedonia. For Liska the definition of empire comes to self-servingly refer to

a state that combines the characteristics of a great power, which, being a world power and a globally paramount state, becomes automatically a power primarily responsible for shaping and maintaining a necessary modicum of world order.⁸³

Vicariously this definition of empire allows Liska to place the US as "an imperial state" operating at the heart of the "international system."⁸⁴ Liska then claims that there are three features that attest to America's imperial status:

One is the tendency for other states to be defined by their relation to the United States; another is the great and growing margin for error in world affairs which guarantees that, barring an act of folly, the United States can do no wrong under the unwritten law of the balance of power; and yet another has been the slow, hesitant, and still-inconclusive movement toward containment aimed at America's supremacy, which is wholly legitimately arrived at and largely beneficently exercised.⁸⁵

Curiously this celebratory stance about American supremacy in a politically "unifocal" world is intermixed with Liska's recognition that the international system

⁸³Liska, *Imperial America* 10.

⁸⁴Liska, *Imperial America* 26.

⁸⁵Liska, *Imperial America* 26.

is actually mixed or “multipolar.”⁸⁶ To Liska such a combination appears rational. Since the US pretends to be both an empire and a nation state, it is torn between opposing forces, the necessity of exercising restraint and responsibility as a nation state versus the embroilment in interempire conflict and desire for expansionism as an imperial power. This allows Liska to argue that the dualistic nature of IR has a transformative potential, changing imperial US from merely an entity bent on the accumulation of power and resources to a state more consonant to certain ideals. He notes for instance that the desired outcome of the Vietnam war and ongoing diplomatic confrontation in Europe will allow for a more effective differentiation of US role and distribution of its power. In saying this Liska is not just reverting to a role as a social scientist but also someone unable to dislodge himself from the ambivalent mission. Some of his concluding words in *Imperial America* therefore reveal a sense of American greatness that seems to have come from the anti-imperialist debate of the early twentieth century:

If the United States comes out of the military confrontation in Asia and out of the diplomatic confrontation in Europe with a sharpened sense of how to differentiate its role and distribute the various components of national power in the different areas of the world, it will have ascended to the crucial and perhaps last step toward the plateau of maturity. It will then have fulfilled the early hopes of its spiritual or actual founders and will have become a true empire—a strong and salient power with the sense of a task exceeding its national limits but not its national resources.⁸⁷

In a more pronounced way one finds the ambivalence of American imperial mission in IR to be more distinctly articulated in *Career of Empire* where Liska further pursues the question of American empire and how it could rationally be understood. But in a way not dissimilar to *Imperial America* this text encompasses both a tacit reliance on social science models and an implicit, value-laden sense of American

⁸⁶On this note Liska suggests a different political system in which states are actors that have “independent power capable of exercising initiatives and assuming responsibilities as well as influencing the behavior of the two superpowers.” Liska, *Imperial America* 46.

⁸⁷Liska, *Imperial America* 108.

superiority and global responsibility. Therefore what appears to be on the one hand distant, rational, and documentary collapses into dogmatic proclamations of US exceptionalism on the other. Liska's overt task claims to find an historical model for the US, honing in on the experience of Rome and Britain to produce a "hybrid" example. Here Liska fails to find a neat parallel between the US and historical patterns since its search for global power and resulting interempire conflicts made it resemble Rome more, while its maritime imperium appeared closer in style to that of the British. This nostalgic mood to be "like" Rome and Britain presents Liska with a crisis because these historical experiences have also been moral travesties, something that Liska is silent about.

Career of Empire's interpretation of American imperialism thus appears to suspiciously incorporate a rectifying element that, unknown to Liska, is a fundamental trope of colonial discourse. This can be seen in one of his opening statements:

The present volume sets out to show, on the side of method, how closely the periods of empire in the American career can be fitted into a framework of analysis connecting the American with the earlier experiences of empire. On the side of substantive issues, this volume seeks to lay the groundwork for a considered answer to the question whether the latest American appointment with empire, on a world-wide basis, was to be accounted a success or a failure. It was a success if it prepared the ground for a global system of equilibrium within which the United States could perform a role partaking of the best (or idealized) elements of the British empire at its apogee; and it was a failure if an inadequate implementation of empire after a too facile expansion, and a premature withdrawal from it, were to leave the world in a condition apt to reproduce some of the worst (or caricatural) characteristics of the "dark ages" consequent on the disappearance of the Roman empire.⁸⁸

The rectifying element—the moral capacity to evaluate success or failure of empire—is particularly misleading because there is no neutral or acultural standard on which such judgements could be made. Liska's preferred neutral ground is unsurprisingly the rationality contained within the social sciences. If one of the main features of

⁸⁸Liska, *The Career of Empire* x.

empire is expansionism, then any analysis of that action must be based on transparent, calculated and well-planned decisions. For Liska realist IR prescribes this as a result of predatory and preclusive drives and of the state's necessity of projecting or protecting itself. Any decision to expand is at once caused by primeval necessities like the satisfaction of the state's psychological or material needs (like self-assertion for "security and sustenance") or of systemic demands leading to further preemptive expansion. Mechanically such views immediately presume that imperial expansion is an inevitability, but more appropriately recalls the Niebuhrian dilemma that once the US is thrown into a pre-existing chaotic and competitive world, it has no choice but to become imperial. Since the US has always reacted to imperialism and power with great ambivalence, Liska's method of assuaging the inherent tensions between the overt "reality" of empire and the intrinsic desire for restraint and responsibility is to alter the terms on which IR theory of empire is based. Hence *Career of Empire* becomes a selective statement about American experience with empire, claiming similarities with earlier historical examples on one hand and uniqueness on the other.⁸⁹

America's Imperial Mission Revisited

In surveying the imperial record of the United States a number of outstanding features must be mentioned. The concept of the "mission" was elaborated broadly as the export of any justification for imperial rule and as such seems to be applicable to the creation of any empire in history. Specifically in the context of the twentieth century, however, this mission is also ambivalent and provides useful insights into changing networks of knowledge and power as far as world political descriptions are concerned. Events like formal decolonization, the political restructuring of the world,

⁸⁹Liska, *Career of Empire* 336–351.

the creation of globalism, and increasing search for scientific terms of reference have tended to discount the applicability of imperialism as an analytical concept. Yet the ambivalence of the mission has created a parallel textual condition where at every historical turn imperialism returns with an intensity and visage that adapts to prevailing moral standards. Hence in America, it is possible to borrow JanMohamed's distinction between "imaginary" and "symbolic" texts. At one level the conscious debate about imperialism (read locally as formal colonialism) in the early 1900s converges ironically as a celebration of the superiority of American values and culture. By so doing the debate ironically becomes imperialist in one form while being anti-imperialistic in another. At another level even with the extended awareness of the colonial complexity in the texts, such awareness is restricted by an overall social compunction or rationalization in that criticism must somehow be beneficial to the American community. There is a prevailing tension here because one is forced to argue that American imperialism is in some ways particular, revolving around changing historical and cultural conditions. But on the other hand US imperialism is also a system that coheres with a larger facet of western colonial desire. The attempt to "write" the empire is thus based on the ambivalent and disjunctive mission. The texts in question are the "earlier" literature of postwar international relations. Not unlike its 19th century counterparts of literary fiction, travel writing, and works of anthropology and other scholarly descriptions, IR serves to reinforce the legitimacy of the empire and the reality of the western constructed world. But its embedding in a combination of social sciences, pragmatic philosophy, and sense of the mission (each mutually reducible to the other) produces a moral angst reinterpreting the meaning of imperialism and the use of its associated power. In this chapter, Reinhold Niebuhr's works were read as a paradigmatic illustration of these concerns. Because of space limitations the full complexity of Niebuhr's ideas

could not given the coverage they deserve since they straddle between a moralistic and religious view of the world that cannot be reconciled with the notion of the world as eternally conflicting and political. This irrational approach articulates and produces a form of realism that has become the foundation for so many other texts in IR including those of Morgenthau and Liska. I referred to these authors subsequently so as to stress the adaptation of Niebuhr's moralistic irrationalism as zone in which imperialism came to be constantly refigured. In the case of Morgenthau, realist IR created a language in which America's moral angst could be lessened, separating the moral individual from exigencies of the immoral international community. By so doing it creates a linguistic structure through which imperialism returns as a selective trope directed towards others and to justify American power as a foil to this imperialism. For Liska this linguistic structure is further appropriated, creating imperialism as an entity split between its figuring as an analytical system "devoid" of any moralistic implications and as a contingent move against which US policy has to react. I argue that these are important textual strategies that must be observed in reading contemporary colonial discourse. What further transformations about America's imperial mission can be gathered from this? If the cold war gave rise to the canonicity of the texts of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and to some extent, Liska, how would changes in the international system have affected the image of imperialism in IR? It is to these questions that the following chapter turns.

Chapter Five

BRIDGING TENSIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Imperial Strategies and the Writings of Joseph Conrad and Samuel Huntington

For the first time in over half a century, no single great power, or coalition of powers, poses a "clear and present danger" to the national security of the United States. The end of the Cold War has left Americans in the fortunate position of being without an obvious adversary.... It would be foolish to claim, though, that the United States after 1991 can return to the role it played in world affairs before 1941. For as the history of the 1930s suggests, the absence of imminent threat is no guarantee that threats do not exist. Nor will the isolationism of that era be possible in the 1990s. Advances in military technology and the progress of economic integration have long since removed the insulation from the rest of the world that geographical distance used to provide. The passing of the Cold War world by no means implies an end to American involvement in whatever world is to follow; it only means that the nature and the extent of that involvement is unclear.

John Lewis Gaddis¹

...[The] prospects for major crises and war in Europe are likely to increase markedly if the Cold War ends and [the replacement of European bipolarity with multipolarity] unfolds. The next decades in Europe without the superpowers would probably not be as violent as the first 45 years of this century, but would probably be substantially more prone to violence in the past 45 years....

Three principal policy prescriptions follow from this analysis. First, the United States should encourage a process of limited nuclear proliferation in Europe. Specially, Europe will be more stable if Germany acquires a secure nuclear deterrent, but proliferation does go beyond that point. Second, the United States should not withdraw fully from Europe, even if the Soviet Union pulls its forces out of Eastern Europe. Third, the United States should take steps to forestall the re-emergence of hyper-nationalism in Europe.

John Mearsheimer²

¹John Lewis Gaddis, "Toward the Post-Cold War World," *Foreign Affairs* 70.2 (1991): 102.

²John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15.1 (1990): 6, 8.

These quotations represent just two of the many views that have come to constitute post cold war international relations. While they disagree on the future shape of world order—positing either an optimistic one view of the potential for peace or a pessimistic one alluding to the return of international chaos and anarchy—they converge on the idea that American international activism remains the *sine qua non* of global politics today. This form of self-serving reasoning is a good example of the “ambivalent mission” I have outlined in the previous chapter. In brief, it is the export of justification for imperial rule by writers, diplomats, and policymakers who may (or may not) be actively aware of the colonial mentality of their writings. Such a return to the centrality of American (imperial) power notwithstanding the outcome of world order interestingly raises questions about how the “mission” negotiates historical transformations in textual productions. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to extend the argument of the previous one by surveying the IR literature of the 1980s and 1990s. If scholars generally express a note of bafflement about IR in recent times, how do the anxieties and tensions in these writings enunciate the relationship between imperialism and IR? How do they remain convergent and yet also apart from the consistent imperial culture that underpins it? By cross reading the works of the great colonial author, Joseph Conrad, with those of the well-known political scientist, Samuel Huntington, I seek to mutually collocate their works in colonial discourse and to accentuate the central trope of ambivalence at the heart of their views about morality and imperial power.

When Texts Fail Us...

Since the 1950s and 60s, disciplinary international relations has been consistently dominated by a set of texts. There are too many of these to mention here but can similarly be represented by the intellectual styles of Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans J.

Morgenthau, and George Liska, as was elaborated in the previous chapter. To this list we can also add Kenneth Waltz, Robert Gilpin, Robert Keohane, and George Kennan from the US, and Hedley Bull, Martin Wight, and E.H. Carr from the UK. So influential have their texts been that they have in some cases been revered as “founding fathers” or “masters” of international relations,³ tacitly suggesting that they collectively established a golden age of the discipline. But what was so remarkable about these texts and why have their authors been so lionized? Supporters of these writers would attribute their success to their genius, inspiration, or perspicacity of the complicated realm of world affairs, but to many of the recent critics, these canonical IR texts became what they were because of their complicity with the growing popularity of the broader field of the social sciences and the prevailing American desire to represent the world in certain set ways amenable to US supremacy.⁴ Thus the number of varied theories and ideas proposed by these “masters” of IR—the indefinite duration of global bipolarity, the relentless militarization (or nuclearization) of international life, and the indissoluble fixity of the sovereign state—were vital to constructing the imagination of the world in a particular way. By so doing the increasing circularity of canonical IR texts discursively produced sub-texts like the espionage novel,⁵ newspaper reportage, and contemporary forms of travel writing that only served to reinforce that imagination of the world.

³Kenneth W. Thompson, *Masters of International Thought: Major Twentieth-Century Theorists and the World Crisis* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980). See also Kenneth W. Thompson, *Fathers of International Thought—The Legacy of Political Theory* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1994).

⁴See Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994) 4–9.

⁵James Der Derian, “Spy Versus Spy: The Intertextual Power of International Intrigue,” *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, eds. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Lexington Books, 1989) 163–187.

Towards the end of the 1980s mainstream IR was coming under attack from newer subdisciplines, methodologies, and epistemologies. To a large extent the collapse of the old cold war structure, the international response to the Gulf War, the acceleration of globalization and the increasing integration of the world economy came to unsettle the canonical IR texts, challenging, in one way or another, the centrality of the state and the mode of international exchange. In some cases the alteration to the prevailing presumptions of the realist canon were only slightly modified, such as through the newer subdisciplines of globalization studies, International Political Economy (IPE), and Peace and Conflict Studies. In other cases IR was reworked from ground up as a host of metatheoretical practices such as postmodernism, Critical Theory, neo-Marxism, and feminism sought to reconstitute and critique the very social and cultural foundations of the discipline.⁶ Whatever the case may be, what was previously recognized as the unshakeable and dogmatic texts of IR have come to be rent about by rather divisive forces. Aptly, it has become what Holsti brands as the “dividing discipline.”⁷

Consequently there is a double tension in IR. The first is intrinsic to the canon’s impact on IR practice, articulating the fear to the policy community and other interested circles in Washington that it is now impossible to “accurately” predict what the new world order would resemble and what forms of contingency planning US foreign policy must make. In effect the world has become openly interpretable, producing an eclectic group of those who support such scenarios as globalization, the liberalist “end of history,”⁸ or the prevalence of intercivilizational conflict. Ironically

⁶See the following chapter.

⁷K.J. Holsti, *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1985).

⁸See Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” *The National Interest* 16 (1989): 3–18; and *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992).

all three views are “spin-offs” from positivist-realist IR and mark a desire to be “groundbreakingly” different without necessarily stepping away from the mainstream. Lying parallel to the undecidable world order is the second tension especially resonant among scholars that the discipline stands in danger of being too divergent to have any conceptual utility. Thus the rejection of ever having an objective and value free representation of the world makes it difficult for there to be a dialogue in which different groups of scholars could engage. This is not problematic in itself but produces varying responses from outright celebration and collectively point to anxieties in the American IR academy.⁹ What this means is that even though the crisis of post cold war IR affects many peripheral centres of IR learning in the world, it has a distinctively American metropolitan flavour inflecting a sense of anxiety over the dispensation of its political power in the future. As Jim Richardson observes, in most cases, the writings theorizing the “changing world order” over the last decade (1990s) have been largely American ones, with a small British contribution, and an even tinier international component.¹⁰

That the American IR academy should be so engrossed in post-cold war disciplinary anxieties should not come as a surprise, since the US has consistently been both pedantic about its greatness as a civilization and world power and nostalgic for a tradition of colonial adventure (which the British had) that it could never claim as its own. At the same time these attitudes toward empire are also tempered by a claim to be “exceptional,” more liberal, and essentially different from Europe, in a word, anti-imperialist. What is now thought of as IR’s “golden age,”

⁹Yale H. Ferguson and Richard W. Mansbach, “Between Celebration and Despair: Constructive Suggestions for Future International Theory,” *International Studies Quarterly* 35.4 (1991): 363–386.

¹⁰J. L. Richardson, “Questions About a Post-Cold War International Order,” Department of International Relations Working Paper no. 2 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1992) 3.

when the grand texts were established, its boundaries conquered, and its canon propagated, must perforce be reread as an era of tension no different from its current moment of crisis. After all IR in the 1950s had to pacify and domesticate the representation of the world. It had to do so at a period of time when the uncertainties of the postwar world had to be solidly interpreted into something amenable to American "anti-imperialist" sensibilities that were different from the British empire but still possessing the inflection of imperialism nonetheless. Once more in the 1990s, such redefinition desperately attempts to seize particular imaginations of the world that outwardly appear novel and unexplored but are, in effect, re-articulations of American imperial desire.

Appearing as an *idée fixe* in this thesis is the concept of disjuncture, dispensing with delineated and rationalistic arguments and insisting that colonial discourse is pervasive and enduring because it can remain coherent in spite of opposing and contradictory strands of thought. Disjuncture is the central link between imperialism and IR because it allows the changes in modern academic learning, literary genres, material historical conditions, and not least, increasing moral self-awareness in IR without creating space for non-western views to contest the discipline's understanding of the world. Therefore, disjuncture can be considered highly ambivalent as it inculcates in post-cold war IR a sense of imperial consciousness without disengaging from the mission that remains resolutely at its core. This assertion, of course, requires further elaboration since it juxtaposes with the reading of IR literature by several scholars in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. In this respect, it is possible to ask how the more recent tensions in world politics have given rise to the post cold war writings in IR. How do they fit into the disjunctive connections between IR and imperialism? How do they on a whole possess that affinity with texts more readily identifiable with colonialism?

This chapter is, in principle, a cross reading between two writers, the late 19th and early 20th century adventurer, author, and social critic, Joseph Conrad, and in more recent years, the Harvard-based political scientist, Samuel P. Huntington. To the uninitiated, reading between Conrad and Huntington may appear to be a curious task. Notably both authors belong to different timeframes, metropolitan centres, and different genres. For instance Conrad's work comprise mostly of fiction concentrating on stories about travel adventures in the non-western world or commentaries about social problems in Britain. On the other hand Samuel Huntington's are more "factive" in nature, dealing heavily on a wide array of issues like political change, developmental societies, democratization, and US foreign policy. If anything, Conrad and Huntington could not be more different. Or are they? It is precisely on this note that one must query because if it can be shown that both authors are culturally more similar than originally thought and that their writings strongly reflect the ambivalence of imperialism, then the proposition that post cold war IR retains its disjunctive affiliation with empire stands to be buttressed.

Let me further explain why it is important to read Conrad in tandem with Huntington. First both authors do not operate in a mode that can be strictly classified as "fictional" or "factive." This is certainly a post-structuralist assertion that holds true with all texts, and similarly trace the idea that all texts are worldly, incorporating such attitudes as imperialism in them. However there are some unique aspects about Conrad because even in the most literary of his novels there is a very close affinity with the background and cultural forces that give rise to them.¹¹ Such texts like *Nostramo*, *Heart of Darkness*, or *The Secret Agent* are very personal to Conrad because they form the basis of his criticisms about certain social conditions he finds appalling and disheartening. Indeed the works of Conrad are moralistic because they attempt

to engage with the materially real and pressing concerns of the day. Moreover, Conrad's writings have been described to be autobiographical allusions,¹² blurring the boundaries between which characters and events are real or fictitious. For Huntington there are considerably fewer self-conscious reflections about the relationship between his personal moral concerns and his writings. In most cases he tries to write with an objective voice that varies markedly. This is not due to personal indecisiveness but became constant fluctuations in the prevailing conservatism of American culture. I shall explore this more in a later section.

Second, both Conrad and Huntington harbour attitudes towards colonialism, imperialism, the idea of the west, and the use of power in ways that do not readily disclose aspects of a colonial representative economy. Instead they vacillate indecisively between views that either reinforce or justify these ideas among their metropolitan readership and positions that appear critical of them. Many of Conrad's writings have been read by contemporary literary analysts as powerful and profound indictments of western imperialism. Yet ironically the selective nature of such colonial criticisms is actually conveyed through a self-sustaining discourse that strengthens—and resists—the larger image of the west. Similarly Huntington's different writings shift from the importance of global democratization to the futility of universalism, and from the diminution of western political power to the outright need to celebrate western uniqueness. These patterns cannot be reduced to a matter of inconsistency but must be analyzed as examples of underlying colonial desire.

The third reason for juxtaposing the works of Conrad and Huntington is the prevailing social and political conditions of their respective eras. Both write at

¹¹D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, *Joseph Conrad: Beyond Culture and Background* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1990).

¹² See Edward W. Said, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966); F. Driver, "Geography's Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10.1 (1992): 23–26.

historical junctures that are watershed periods, reflecting either an inordinate amount of anxiety and uncertainty or a period of certain triumph and mastery. For Conrad and Huntington these opposing moods coexisted. In Conrad's case the turn of the century saw the transition of literary style from the Victorian novel to contemporary fiction. But more importantly it was one in which the British Empire reached its peak and the denoting of what GoGwilt sees as the "invention of the west."¹³ It is at the pinnacle of power that allows for an imperial world outside and the concerns of British social fragmentation to be doubly inscribed. This conversely creates its ironies as the height of British mastery also spelt the loss of the exotic and other foreign lands to discover and occupy. It also meant that one could no longer be certain about how much longer British superiority and power would last. Huntington's post cold war world is no different because it celebrates the moral and strategic triumph of the US over the Soviet Union on the one hand but leaves the question about US power open to interpretation on the other. Otherwise stated there was no specific language in which this power could be materially comprehended.

Finally a note about the stature Conrad and Huntington occupy in their respective fields. These two authors were chosen because of their profile, visibility, and impact on different genres. While being influential in their own right they are important figures to consider because they have virtually monopolized an entire field but because they have incited as much criticism as they have commanded admiration and support. In this manner Conrad is worthwhile pursuing because his works have, over time, been read and reread, and has been labeled anything from a humane anti-imperialist to a racist,¹⁴ and also as the only literary great to come after Charles Dickens. Likewise Huntington has been regarded as one of the more important

¹³Christopher Lloyd GoGwilt, *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

¹⁴Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa," *The Massachusetts Review* 18.4 (1977): 788.

writers in international relations. Yet his position in the disciplinary canons is more controversial as his critics number as many as (if not greater than) his supporters. But Huntington is an embodiment of the post cold war era and even if his predictions about clashing civilizations fail to materialize, the fact that his views have been so widely debated give purchase to the very fundamental concerns subconsciously lying at the root of American society.

Tensions stemming from large scale historical change and the failure of texts to adequately meet social and political needs are thus important elements in the critique of imperialism. In the following two sections I reread several works belonging to Joseph Conrad and Samuel Huntington, emphasizing their affinity with morality and the employment of power. The theme that resonates is that even when they least refer to imperialism the inflection of western dominance lies discretely at each turn.¹⁵ In the last section I reconsider post-cold war IR as a product of these disjunctive readings.

Joseph Conrad and the Ambivalence of Fiction

The relationship between texts (or textuality) and imperialism has oftentimes been analyzed through the trope of power and legitimization. With regard to late Victorian and early contemporary texts like scholarly writings in anthropology and geography, and works of “pure” fiction, such a relationship is a mutually reinforcing one. Texts set out with predetermined views about their non-western objects and represent them in ways that celebrate the superior and advanced position of the west while at the

¹⁵For instance, some of Conrad’s works did not have overly imperialist themes and may have focused more on domestic political issues. Yet no matter how far he departed from his usual depictions of the colonies and focused on the metropolitan centre, the image of empire remains undeniably present. See Roger Lee Harm, *The Literature of Imperialism: Kipling, Conrad, and Forster*, diss., Stanford University, 1975 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1980). See also GoGwilt.

same time legitimizing colonial ventures in these parts of the world. Although such forms of criticisms powerfully expose a fundamental aspect of colonial discourse, especially pertaining to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they can also be inadequate in dealing with texts that appear to be more indecisive and ambivalent about their connections with imperialism. For instance, how does one come to terms with texts that are aware of the complicity between strategies of representing the colonial other and colonialism but are also productive of imperialism on a larger scale?

Joseph Conrad is just such an author who defies an easy classification within that textuality-imperialism schema. Depending on the time and prevailing attitudes of literary criticism, Conrad's work as well as its reception have shifted from unqualified universalism to trenchant anti-imperialism. If Conrad's works were to be recognized as instances of greatness and literary mastery, how is one to locate this in the moral framework of imperialism? On the one hand conservative literary critics would dismiss the importance of imperialism, arguing for larger universal relevance of his work. As such imperialism merely serves as the cultural background on which the more vital aspects of writing, like thematic, linguistic, and stylistic command an author has, could be appreciated. On the other hand there are also critics who perceive his greatness as a direct effect of his imagination of empire. In this case Conrad's mastery arises out of his self-conscious anti-imperial stance that is exceptionally different from such counterparts as Kipling, Forster, and Rider Haggard, and in particular, his ability to secure critical narratives that spoke powerfully to a mainstream metropolitan readership.

This difficulty in locating Conrad within colonial discourse should not lead to an interpretation that his works depart from it. Instead Conrad is more appropriately recognized as a symbol of ambivalence that is also central to colonialism. This

ambivalence is an important element to consider because it consists in a duality that reaffirms the central idea of western imperial power. In particular one commemorates the moral positioning of Conrad that appears to be so solidly against the physical and violent implications of imperialism. For example, in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad's character, Marlow, makes this famous statement:

They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force—nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what is to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look at it too much.¹⁶

But in the same breath Conrad seems to negate this indictment of imperialism by adding, “what redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it, not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before and offer a sacrifice to....”¹⁷ Conrad's selectiveness in deciding aspects of imperialism that are deplorable and redeemable are not contradictory in themselves. They are both delineated and disjunctive. In one case Conrad obviously makes the distinction between the more immediate and physical forms of violence with subtler structural “benefits”—progress, science, and development—of colonialism. These are simply conceptual or categorical distinctions that do not undermine the overall project of imperialism. In another case Conrad's works are also disjunctive because they are dialectically intransigent, suggesting that even when Conrad's impressions of colonialism are more delineated at local or more precise levels of reading, they can also be understood as having overlapping or divergent effects. This means that his words are more subversively embedded in an economy of desire making it extremely difficult to separate the imperialist from the anti-

¹⁶Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Hampson (London: Penguin, 1995 [1902]) 20.

imperialist. As Devlin argues, “writers have only limited control over intended textual meanings and even less over their reception.”¹⁸

The ambivalent nature of Conrad’s writing necessarily results in a splitting in his perception of empire but does not make him any more a distinctive writer. In effect it places him within a dualistic structure of modernity that depends on a “simultaneous rejection of and dependence upon traditions of imperial narrative.”¹⁹ There have been numerable assertions on this point. For example, Edward Said locates this double vision as an exact by-product of European imagination comprising of its own “moral and intellectual framework” and also as time and place specific to a set of narratives.²⁰ Fraser calls him a “homo duplex” where his perceptions of moral problems are divided between conflicting loyalties.²¹ Andrea White identifies this “double vision” as symptomatic of modernity in which the desire for colonial conquest subsists with its condemnation.²² But amidst these views it is Benita Parry who provides a more discerning account of this duality. Says Parry,

Scholars may differ on defining the source and content of Conrad’s double vision, but the consensus is that he is the artist of ambivalence and the divided mind, a writer who discerned and gave novelistic life to those binary oppositions constituting the phylogenetic inheritance of the species and defining its existential condition. That Conrad perceived of the world dualistically and was preoccupied by the interaction of antagonistic forces, are propositions abundantly evident in the fictions

¹⁷Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 20.

¹⁸Kimberly J. Devlin, “The Eye and the Gaze in *Heart of Darkness*: A Symptomological Reading,” *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 40.4 (1994): 712.

¹⁹ Sarah Cole, “Conradian Alienation and Imperial Intimacy,” *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 44.2 (1998): 252.

²⁰Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993) 20–35.

²¹Gail Fraser, *Interweaving Patterns in the Works of Joseph Conrad* (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1988) 135.

²² Andrea White, *Joseph Conrad and the Adventure Tradition: Constructing and Deconstructing the Imperial Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 6–7.

and confirmed by his commentaries on how he conceived the nature of his fictional undertaking.²³

How then does Conrad's ambivalence locate him in the discursive textual formation of his era and what ideas on imperialism can one gather out of this? This section now examines three different groups of work, collectively his essays on "Geography and Some Explorers" and "Travel,"²⁴ his famous novella, *Heart of Darkness*, and his novel, *The Secret Agent*.

There are a number of reasons why it is helpful to begin an examination of Conrad's work with "Geography and Some Explorers" and "Travel." In these essays a few concerns stand out. They can be considered "opinion" pieces rather than works of fiction. As such Conrad is more candid about the prevailing cultural influences in his work and less circumlocutory and indirect. More importantly they reveal a cultural grounding that Conrad reviles but must inevitably rely on for his works to be accepted. As such these essays underline his obsession with the heroic exploits associated with earlier forms of geographical travel and discovery as well as sadness with what has come to be routinized travel in the late 19th century. It is on this notion that the first of the Conradian ambivalence stands out. In "Geography" Conrad seeks to historically locate the manner by which space is conquered by the western imagination and how he perceives of himself within this arrangement.²⁵ For Conrad geography is the very entity that summons his attention and incites his passion because it is linked to the romantic tradition of travel, adventure, and exploration. In

²³ Benita Parry, *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983) 3.

²⁴ The joint examination of these two articles was inspired by Driver. My appreciation of Conrad's division of geographical history into three phases comes via Driver's reading of these two essays.

²⁵ Joseph Conrad, "Geography and Some Explorers," *Tales of Hearsay and Last Essays* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1963 [1928]) 1-21.

this sense Conrad calls it the “most blameless of sciences”²⁶ because it does not directly intervene in moral or human agency. But Conrad is remarkably disingenuous in this instance because all of the Conradian oeuvre vacillates between various forms of geographical pleasure and the call for a superior observatory view. In a word Conrad is unable to escape the ambivalence of the colonial gaze, drawing an elision between the propriety of “passive” geographical and textual representations of the non-west and the evils of physical colonial violence.

In “Geography” Conrad divides the history of geography into two phases, medieval or fabulous geography and geography militant. Each is not without its underlying anxiety and moral intransitivity, although in this essay (far more than in “Travel”) he celebrates a facet of geography and its not so illustrious past. As inevitably a modern subject Conrad dismisses medieval geography as an era of speculation and fantasy. For example, he says that its maps are “crowded... with pictures of strange pageants, strange trees, strange beasts drawn with amazing precision in the midst of theoretically derived continents.”²⁷ For geography militant, an era marked by increased maritime activities and exploration, it is also represented by the “vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration.”²⁸ This displeasure cannot stand alone because it is also part of the economy of desire that motivates Conrad. If fabulous geography thrives on the exotic and the unsupported imagination of the non-European world, then it is this drive that motivates the gaze to represent the other as exotic as well as the glamour and thrill behind the necessary travel and exploration. In a similar vein Conrad’s aversion to some of the “evil” effects of geography militant also subsists

²⁶Conrad, “Geography and Some Explorers” 3.

²⁷Conrad, “Geography and Some Explorers” 2.

²⁸Conrad, “Geography and Some Explorers” 17.

with his celebration of its heroic nature. After all this era is also marked by countless episodes of explorers and adventurers who had “selflessly” contributed to increasing objective geographical knowledge. Thus in celebrating the accomplishments of James Cook, Tasman, and John Franklin, Conrad recapitulates his ideals of geography. He commends them as the “single minded explorers of the nineteenth century, the late fathers of militant geography whose only object was the search for truth.”²⁹ In this connection one must juxtapose this with the terms of imperialism Conrad appears oblivious to:

Regions unknown! My imagination could depict to itself there worthy, adventurous and devoted men, nibbling at the edges, attacking from north and south and east and west, conquering a bit of truth here and a bit of truth there, and sometimes swallowed up by the mystery their hearts were so persistently set on unveiling.³⁰

Suffice it to say such an expression exposes to colonial tropes of conquest in which “truth” metonymically and subversively stands in place of the other.

These ambivalent views of fabulous and militant geography are not without personal commitment as they form a memorializing background on which Conrad locates his passion in contrast to the harsh realities of his geographical present. It is important to remember that Conrad was never an actual participant of “geography militant” and much of his fantasies about them were acquired through reading about the exploits of the early discoverers, his boyhood fantasies, and his internalization of a moral logic of travel.³¹ By the time Conrad became an adult the mysteries of the

²⁹Conrad, “Geography and Some Explorers” 10.

³⁰Conrad, “Geography and Some Explorers” 13–14.

³¹Conrad’s passion for travel cannot be so easily described as aligning oneself to the prevailing morals of society. In other words Conrad was not just influenced by Victorian society’s valorization of masculine exploration and travel, but Conrad’s own passions were aroused as a need for self-discovery. Thus Conrad’s desire physical travel and exploration doubles as a more internalized and more psychical journey. As he says, “The great spirit of the realities of the story sent me off on the romantic explorations of my inner self; to the discovery of the taste of poring over maps; and revealed to me the existence of a latent devotion to geography which interfered with my devotion... to my other schoolwork.” Conrad, “Geography and Some Explorers” 12.

world outside Europe had all but evaporated. The era of exploration had given way to an era of commercial and routine travel, and the great texts of adventure were replaced by mundane travel guides. As Conrad laments:

...the days of heroic travel are gone; unless, of course, in the newspaper sense, in which heroism like everything else in the world becomes as common, if not as nourishing, as our daily bread. There would be always a lady or a gentleman ready to discover with considerable fuss a bit of territory of, say, ten square miles, resembling exactly the surrounding and already explored lands; or interview some new ruler, like a reflection in a dim and tarnished mirror of some real chieftain in the books of a hundred years ago; or marvel at a disagreeable fish of ferocious habits which had been described already in some old-time, simply-worded, unsensational "Relations." But even this is a game which is losing its interest, and in a very little time will have come to an end.³²

It is precisely because geography's past is unattainable that Conrad exalts it and longs nostalgically for a return to "real" travelling, even as he sets up his present as a foil for the past. This desire for the past produces an anxiety that parallels the dualistic aspect of modernity. But in Conrad's life this disappointment with the increasing knowledge of the non-west ceases to dissuade, and Conrad subsequently finds himself in the footsteps of his explorer heroes, rediscovering places that have already been conquered.

Much more of this valorization of travel and exploration and disenchantment with his present can be found in the fictions of Conrad, and in particular *Heart of Darkness* stands out as an important example. Noted as the colonial novel par excellence *Heart of Darkness* can be described as a narrative microcosm of colonial discourse. Since so many different interpretations have emerged from it, readers have found virtually every aspect of colonial history in it. These include the question of race/racism, the representation of Africa/the other, the jostling between commercial and other forms of imperialism, the tensions of capitalism, the righteousness of science, the triumph of western knowledge, and the dangers of "going native."

³²Joseph Conrad, "Travels," *Last Essays* (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1926) 128–129.

Certainly the list does not end here. But if Conrad displays an ambivalent attitude towards geography, travel, and exploration in “Geography and Some Explorers” and “Travel,” then many of the same anxieties are echoed in this novella. It is important to remember, in this sense, that *Heart of Darkness* was not spun out of abstract fantasy or imagination but parallels Conrad’s own experiences in and memories of the Congo. And many of the ideals harboured by its narrator, Marlow, are the same as the author’s.³³ The novella is an example of Conrad’s feelings of his geographical present. As in “Travel” Conrad transposes his childhood passion for adventure and travel into Marlow, something that would be, much later in his narrator’s adult life, shattered through a combination of the corruption of the ethic of exploration and the diminishing of the frontier. In an oft quoted segment of *Heart of Darkness* Marlow recounts that his childhood fantasies were filled by the “blank spaces” on maps that beckoned to be explored and conquered in the name of scientific geographical study. But much is to transpire over the course of his growing years. As these “blank spaces” came to be increasingly filled, Marlow finds his dreams shattered.³⁴ But an underlying desire transforms and retrains his passion. Thus we find that the adult Marlow never loses sight of the “biggest blank” (presumably Africa) and eventually finds his way venturing up a river that has already been discovered.³⁵

³³Cf. Conrad, “Geography and Some Explorers” 12–14 with *Heart of Darkness* 21–22. See also Patrick Parrinder, “*Heart of Darkness*: Geography as Apocalypse,” *Fin de Siècle/Fin du Globe: Fears and Fantasies of the Late Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Stokes (London: Macmillan, 1992) 86.

³⁴Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 21–22.

³⁵The concepts of discovery and travel are of grave importance to the colonial experience, not so much in the way they express the power of the colonizer, but in the mechanism that reconciles the anxieties associated with discovery. Since physical space is a finite entity, increasing colonial discovery would only mean that the unknowns of this world will only disappear rapidly, leaving fewer and fewer places to explore. Conrad’s concerns reflect this as Africa becomes less and less mysterious. But Conrad’s manifest ability to overcome the loss of the unknown does not mean that the continent is becoming a different place. In effect, it ironically demonstrates a latent desire to keep Africa in a state that is permanently inferior to Europe. As Bill Ashcroft writes, “the increasing darkness of Africa is proportionate to the growth of exploration and colonisation rather than the reverse, because the perpetuation and

I contend that this is a crucial focal point in *Heart of Darkness* because such an aspect of geographical loss has already sown the seeds of dissatisfaction. And this forces us to reconsider the novella as an instance in which Marlow/Conrad cannot decide on the imagination of imperialism but must produce a disjunctive idea that both celebrates and condemns western presence in Africa. For many readers over the last three or four decades *Heart of Darkness* has been interpreted as a work of disaffection, by an author who, unlike others, was capable of penetrating the imperial mind and proffered an alternate moral picture of empire. Such interpretations make use of the novella's narrative in any of the following ways. *Heart of Darkness* has a simple plot at the surface; that is, Marlow's recounting of his river journey in search of Kurtz, the manager of a trading outpost. But it is the density of the text that provides much fuel to what appears to be an attack on colonialism. This assault is propelled by many things; a pre-existing moral consciousness that is written into Marlow, the use of atmospheric and contrasting metaphors,³⁶ the conflation of time and space,³⁷ and Kurtz as the metonymic embodiment of Europe.³⁸ Thus, in the

entrenchment of the *idea* of Africa was integral to the process of colonial control." Bill Ashcroft, "Globalism, Post-Colonialism and African Studies," *Post-Colonialism: Culture and Identity in Africa*, eds. Pal Ahluwalia and Paul Nursey-Bray (Commack: Nova Science Publishers, 1997) 12. Italics in original.

³⁶Parry 21.

³⁷Parrinder 94–96.

³⁸Kurtz is without doubt a complex figure representing the fusion of so many European ideas and morals of empire. The nature of Kurtz, as Harm believes, connects respectability and savagery as "his greatness includes all of European civilization within the perimeters of a single personality, so that when he falls the whole culture falls with him." Harm 106. There is also a very interesting segment in *Heart of Darkness* in which Marlow assesses Kurtz's contribution to the "International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs." Here Kurtz's background becomes a precondition for understanding his involvement with the society:

The original Kurtz had been educated partly in England, and — as he was good enough to say himself — his sympathies were in the right place. His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz....

Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 82–83.

story, Marlow sets out to find Kurtz and to repatriate him. But as the story progresses Kurtz's character becomes simultaneously more enigmatic and more developed through second hand accounts. His is a figure that is veritably described as towering; one of the trading company's best men abroad, and as someone possessing the most mainstream of views about European dignity in the non-western world and the barbarism of the natives. But as Marlow ventures further up the river one loses sight of Europe and is thrust into Conrad's heart of darkness. Here the geographical specificity is also lost because the darkness is no longer reserved for this part of the world but transmutes to Europe as well. When Marlow finally finds Kurtz, the sovereign symbol of Europe (via Kurtz) has already been disturbed. Kurtz is no longer the bastion of European light in the (African) wilderness exporting the symbolic ivory. Instead he is sick, dying, and has "gone native." Kurtz's ambiguous but infamous dying words, "the horror, the horror,"³⁹ provides an irresolvable epitaph for the figure of Europe, making it impossible to discern the presumption of guilt in colonialism.

I do not disagree with such readings of *Heart of Darkness* so long as they are not assessed to be an unshakeable anti-imperialism on Conrad's part. If anything the novella is a potent form of contemporary colonial discourse because it produces a set of morals predicated on delineation and whose language provides no way out of the imperial conundrum. Even if Conrad intends for the river journey to be a transformative experience for Marlow, forcing him to be more conscious about the ironies and excesses of colonialism towards the end of the story, there is a distinct separation of Europe from Africa. This separation is necessary in the founding moment of Marlow/Conrad's moral sense in which the imperial gaze, the incorruptible nobility of travel and exploration precedes any articulation of the evils

³⁹Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 112.

of imperialism. For example such ideas conveniently hide the sense of European superiority behind the necessity of travel. The representation of Africa, which should have revealed Conrad's racism, is avoided in *Heart of Darkness*. As Chinua Achebe claims, the novella backgrounds the image of Africa and foregrounds Europe, its vices and morals as the subject of debate in the text, causing Africa to be a mere backdrop in which the European disintegration could be articulated:

...Africa as setting and backdrop... eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity into which the wandering European enters at his perils. Of course, there is a preposterous and perverse kind of arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the breakup of one petty European mind... The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the word.⁴⁰

As in the two essays, Conrad's sense of the gaze makes his morality more dubious. If he appears to object to imperialism it would be especially selective, singling out the aporia of its physical forms of violence such as the wars, bloodshed, and plunder associated with colonialism. Yet Conrad finds the role of science, geographical observation, and any passive literary or scholarly representation (in the name of discovery and adventure) unobjectionable, even though they may reinforce the western cultural ground that gives rise to different forms of violence. As Marlow approaches Kurtz's station during his journey upriver, he and his crew come under attack by arrow-shooting natives from the riverbank. The pilgrims on board react by opening fire (with their Winchesters), but to no avail, as the barrage of arrows continued. Marlow's resolution of the situation was several blows of his boat's steam-whistle, effectively ending the assault. Metaphorically this episode again demonstrates the moral lesson Conrad wishes to inculcate; that instruments of war and physical violence cannot resolve such problems as effectively as through the use

⁴⁰Achebe 788.

of science.⁴¹ Once again this illustrates Conrad's faith in science and his inability to recognize that both war and science are intricately linked, and in any event does so to the detriment of the representation of Africa and its natives. If this instance heralds Conrad's pacific stance, then it also establishes the superiority of western mind in being able to make such distinctions and to nonetheless prevail over the other:

With one hand I felt above my head for the line of the steam-whistle, and jerked out screech after screech hurriedly. The tumult of angry and warlike yells was checked instantly, and then from the depths of the woods went out such a tremulous and prolonged wail of mournful fear and utter despair as may be imagined to follow the flight of the last hope from the earth. There was a great commotion in the bush; the shower of arrows stopped, a few dropping shots rang out sharply—then silence...⁴²

Thus Conrad's need of establishing his pacificism comes at the expense of confining the natives in a form of belligerent primitiveness.

In a similar vein *Heart of Darkness* also strives for sense of geography that confuses time and space in favour of a non-physical third space represented by western imagination. In doing so Conrad avoids the distinctive and material space occupied by Africa in order to privilege a sublime or exalted form of travel that is incomprehensible to the African native. At the outset the story emphasizes a very physical form of travel that takes Marlow from Britain to Belgium and to the Congo. But such a travel pales in comparison to the journey that takes place within the colonial mentality. As the plot eventually develops, Marlow's appreciation for the exotic in his journey up river is not predicated on strangeness but in the affiliative connections to the human (meaning western) past. Consider the following segments:

Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings... The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals trying to find the channel, till you

⁴¹For instance see Conrad's objections to militarism and his valorization of scientific studies in essays like "Geography and Some Explorers" and "Travel."

⁴²Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 78.

thought yourself bewitched and cut off forever from everything you had known once—somewhere—far away—in another existence perhaps.⁴³

We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there.... We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that were the aspect of an unknown planet.⁴⁴

Such articulations are already filled with anxiety, as we remember, this river journey has already been made by explorers and the trading company officials many times before Marlow/Conrad. Thus reconciliation takes place in which the known terrain is forever embedded in a prehistory that will always remain distant and strange.⁴⁵ In this particular part of the text, Marlow's equation of the landscape with the unknown, untrodden aspect of earth's prehistoric past is punctuated by series of irregularities, for instance the occasional hut, village, or throng of natives they encountered must also be assimilated into Conrad's sense of humanity:

[The earth] was unearthly, and the men were — No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it — this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled, and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces, but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity — like yours — the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar.⁴⁶

This forms an exceedingly complex tension in which spatiality becomes intertwined with the desire for the other to remain perennially exotic and the necessity of framing and locating the unknown within the boundaries of western experience. If Conrad recognizes such an affiliative kinship with the landscape and the natives, then the mysterious nature of Africa remains forever fixed.

The moral dilemmas, anxieties, ambivalence about the involvement of the west in imperialism, and the implication of nostalgia in the world as palimpsest (the constant discovery and rediscovery of the colonized world) are indeed characteristics

⁴³Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 59.

⁴⁴Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 61–62.

⁴⁵Jacques Darras, *Joseph Conrad and the West: Signs of Empire*, trans. Anne Luyat and Jacques Darras (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982) 41.

⁴⁶Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 62–63.

of “Geography and Some Explorers,” “Travel,” and *Heart of Darkness*. But even as the settings for Conrad’s works have often been outside Europe, the image of the west constantly resurfaces as an unstable and fragmenting entity that has through its participation in empire been transformed into a morally dubious continent, vacillating between righteousness and perversity. In particular, Conrad’s Britain does not escape such effects, and even where Conrad writes uniquely about his adopted home there is a discernible pattern that relates these works to writings on empire. This refers not just to the reappearance and consistency of some characters (like Charlie Marlow) but through “certain thematic connections [that] comprise a dialectical method of exploring a central idea.”⁴⁷ One good example is the way a dangerous cosmopolitanism is informed by imperialism in Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*. Set in late Victorian London this novel initially appears to have very little to do with empire. In fact it has been more widely recognized as Conrad’s experimentation with melodramatic narrative⁴⁸ or publicized as a different genre as it is about “diplomatic intrigue and anarchist treachery,” and the author calls it a “piece of ironic treatment applied to a special subject”⁴⁹ and “*purely a work of imagination.*”⁵⁰ However, the type of interaction that takes place in *The Secret Agent* invokes a consciousness of the dangerous world outside metropolitan Britain that is now inextricably drawn into the fabric of English society. It is through Robert Young’s brief reading of the London in the novel as “defined by incongruous combinations of relationships, mentalities,

⁴⁷Fraser 4. See also Harm.

⁴⁸Goonetilleke 142.

⁴⁹Joseph Conrad quoted in Roger Tennant, Introduction, *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983 [1907]) x.

⁵⁰Conrad quoted in Tennant x. Italics in original.

genders, classes, nationalities, and ethnicities”⁵¹ that sets this dangerous cosmopolitanism going.

The Secret Agent, like many of Conrad’s other works of fiction, is drawn from factual events. In 1894 Londoners received with great consternation the news about a failed attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory, triggering widespread reflection on the way London’s cultural and social integrity had become compromised. Out of this event Conrad weaves in a complex tale of anarchists, revolutionaries, spies, and duplicitous embassy officials with intersecting plots in marital relations, irreconcilable morals, and the mundane facets of everyday life. Conrad’s melodrama constructs Adolf Verloc as an ordinary but despicable porn shop dealer, part revolutionary, and part secret agent in the employ of an unnamed foreign embassy in London. Sensing that Britain had become too much of a safe haven for political revolutionaries, the Embassy’s First Secretary Vladimir threatens to dismiss Verloc unless he demonstrates his usefulness by planting a bomb in the Greenwich Observatory. Verloc enlists the help of his half-witted brother-in-law Stevie to deliver the bomb to the observatory, but in the process of doing so the latter stumbles, prematurely sets the bomb off, and kills himself. This sets a number of melodramatic plotlines going: for instance, Winnie, Verloc’s wife, avenges the death of her beloved brother by killing her husband; Ossipon’s moral disagreements with the misanthropic Professor, who supplies Verloc with the bomb; and the dissensions that take place within the police as they investigate the matter. Although this plot sounds simple it is Conrad’s use of a very dense and temporally displaced narrative that makes it possible for *The Secret Agent* to be read as a product of more duplicitous forces.

⁵¹Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 2.

At the outset the London Conrad creates in *The Secret Agent* no longer appears to be a sovereign imperial centre with an unwavering English culture at its core; it has become tainted by all things foreign. This does not mean that Conrad still perceives these identities in London as a delineated mixture of different groups, but instead casts a disjunctive light on them. Thus foreign-ness of London becomes a microcosm fraught with squabbles, dissensions, and moral disagreements. What strikes the reader is a babble of foreign sounding names: Verloc, Michaelis, Yundt, Ossipon, Vladimir, Wurmt, and so on. There is a point to this since the original perpetrator of the 1894 bombing attempt was of French origin, and while France figures as a passing reference as the source of London's revolutionary activities it is the blending of the "foreign" with Europe in general that creates the greatest complexity in Conrad's cosmopolitanism. Verloc is of questionable national origins. While he claims to Vladimir that he is a British-born subject with French parentage,⁵² that he had served in the French artillery, and that he was working for an unnamed "hybrid" embassy,⁵³ the narrative appears more cynical about that and prefers to construct Verloc as a less trustworthy person. After all, his attempt to bomb the Observatory was Vladimir's attempt to discredit the revolutionaries in London, some of whom (like Michaelis, Yundt, and Ossipon) he keeps as "friends." But before we can claim that Verloc's act was one of betrayal, Conrad demonstrates that the relationships within the coterie of revolutionaries are far from cordial, in effect they

⁵²Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale*, ed. Roger Tennant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983 [1907]) 19–20.

⁵³Conrad does not reveal what country the Embassy represents. The Russian sounding "Vladimir" is offset by one staff with a Germanic name, "Wurmt." *The Secret Agent* also reveals that one of Vladimir's predecessor was a Baron Stott-Wartenheim. This is possibly another attempt to conflate Europe into one generic entity.

are more selfish and self-indulgent in their own sense of moral correctness to bind to any common cause.⁵⁴

The equation of the revolutionary underworld in London as contemptible imports from the foreign world have been noted by a number of literary critics. As Brian Shaffer stresses, *The Secret Agent* uses the double image of pornography and revolutionary politics to represent the vices that are infiltrating England.⁵⁵ For example Verloc is not only a double-crossing secret agent and revolutionary but also a purveyor of pornographic products that we learn are shipped from France. Furthermore there is also the conflation of sexual abnormalities with the revolutionaries, such as the onanistic Professor who seems to be relentlessly protective of his phallic, “perfect detonator,” that he keeps under his clothes.⁵⁶ However, while it may appear these problems originate from overseas, Conrad obfuscates it by interweaving the domestic with the foreign. Notably as Ossipon confronts the Professor whom he suspects as having been involved in the explosion, the latter “moral agent of destruction”⁵⁷ presents a view in which the police could not be regarded separate from the revolutionaries:

[Chief Inspector Heat] was as insignificant as—I can't call to mind anything insignificant enough to compare him with—except Karl Yundt perhaps. Like to like. The terrorist and the policeman both come from the same basket. Revolution, legality—counter moves in the same game; forms of idleness at bottom identical. He plays his little game—so do you propagandists.⁵⁸

While the Professor sees the terrorists and the police as essentially the same, the narrative further confounds by making it difficult to identify with the authorities as

⁵⁴Conrad, *The Secret Agent* 41–60.

⁵⁵Brian W. Shaffer, “‘The Commerce of Shady Wares’: Politics and Pornography in Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*,” *ELH* 62.2 (1995): 443–466.

⁵⁶Shaffer 454–457.

⁵⁷Conrad, *The Secret Agent* 83.

⁵⁸Conrad, *The Secret Agent* 69.

archetypal heroes of the story. Like the revolutionaries, the police are affected by their own internal disputes. The narrative introduces Chief Inspector Heat of the Special Crimes Department as an expert on the anarchist underworld in London, but in one fell swoop that authority is discredited as we discover that he had no forewarning of the Observatory bombing.⁵⁹ To make matters worse Heat wrongly suspects Michaelis as the culprit and this places his superior, the Assistant Commissioner, in a high society quandary because Michaelis' patroness was an important social connection of his wife's.⁶⁰ As a result the Assistant Commissioner's involvement in the bombing becomes more active and less supervisory.

If the Continent and the internal fragmentation of London are implicated in *The Secret Agent*, how does one associate this novel with an ambivalent colonial consciousness? In a sense this is already implicated in the way late Victorian London has been pre-configured for the novel's timeframe. A London of such a cosmopolitan nature immediately presupposes the consequences of imperial power that distorts the image of the metropolitan centre as firmly in control of itself and its peripheries. If London was to be constructed as the centre of the British Empire, then the constant inward movement of people from around the world was to reaffirm the greatness of that city. But the London in *The Secret Agent* is no testament of Britain's imperial prowess providing some enlightenment for all its visitors. It is instead a distorted image, a picture of an imperial centre that had become a victim of its own success. With this in mind it is possible to see the Assistant Commissioner's role as contributing to this picture. Although this character's background seems to be given cursory treatment by the narrative, it is an important aspect that melds the colonial world with the Continent, the internal revolutionary politics with the subversion in

⁵⁹Conrad, *The Secret Agent* 84.

⁶⁰Conrad, *The Secret Agent* 104.

the colonies. The Assistant Commissioner, we are told, started his career in a “tropical colony” where he excelled in exposing and destroying certain secret societies within the native population. Nothing more is said about his work there except that he withdrew from the colonies to humour his new wife.⁶¹ However the Assistant Commissioner’s work in London is not very different from that of the Special Crimes Department, which he currently heads, and in a particular segment recalls his colonial experience to make sense of his chief inspector:

His memory evoked a certain old fat and wealthy native chief in a distant colony whom it was a tradition for the successive Colonial Governors to trust and make much of a firm friend and supporter of the order and legality established by white men; whereas, when examined sceptically, he was found out to be principally his own good friend, and nobody else’s.⁶²

Furthermore when the Assistant Commissioner pays Verloc a visit without identifying himself to Winnie, she first confuses him as one of her husband’s anarchist associates who had just come from the Continent or as one of the Embassy people.⁶³ Such aspects of the Assistant Commissioner’s character must not be considered incidental, as they overdetermined allusions to extricating an untainted British identity. What *The Secret Agent* surreptitiously reveals in such a case is that even the British imperial mentality cannot be constant and unmovable, and it is through this display of irony that London becomes confused with a chaotic exterior.

At the Edge of Imperial Anxiety: Huntington’s World Order

During Joseph Conrad’s time it was fairly impossible to write without reference to the ironic combination of triumph and anxiety that existed in imperialism. Britain had reached the height of its power, with colonies established across the globe and

⁶¹Conrad, *The Secret Agent* 99.

⁶²Conrad, *The Secret Agent* 118.

⁶³Conrad, *The Secret Agent* 148–149.

possessing a sense of profound superiority that it was divinely meant to rule over the world. Yet such attitudes intermingled with a sense of hopelessness and despair, reflected by the internal social decay and fragmentation of English cities, the persistence of class problems, as well as the fear that Britain's colonial successes had precluded the possibility of any further discoveries and conquests. As such Conrad's writings, as anti-imperialist as they might seem, are accurate depictions of imperial anxieties and in order to understand them as works of literary mastery one must be prepared to accept the disjuncture between romanticism/nostalgia and moral sense contained in them. Correspondingly in the 1990s and across the Atlantic, similar qualms were being expressed by numerous authors, both in realms of scholarship and fiction. I do not wish to assert that historical cycles exist and that the United States is now at the same juncture of its imperial history as was Britain in the decades immediately before the first world war. I will leave this to teleological and positivist historians. Instead, the uncanny coincidence of attitudes to imperial history and the associated writings produce a powerful indictment of contemporary colonial discourse.

Writing on a broad range of political issues in the 1990s, Samuel P. Huntington is a very good example of such imperial anxieties. First of all, Huntington's works since the 1960s have not always fallen under the rubric of international relations. Having emphasized strongly issues like civilian-military relations in the US society⁶⁴ or political change in developing countries,⁶⁵ this Harvard-based professor has been more widely identified with the subfield of comparative politics. Towards the end of the 1980s, however, Huntington's work shifted towards the conduct of US foreign

⁶⁴Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957).

⁶⁵Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

policy, the global relevance of democracy, and, of late, the emerging inter-civilizational conflict. This cosmopolitan consciousness was subsequently detected by mainstream IR and adopted as one of the major interpretations of the post-cold war world. Like Conrad's Britain, Huntington's United States (vis-à-vis the world) had reached a turning point in its history, clamouring for new directions in its "world role," redefinition of strategic principles, and reconciliation with an increasingly fragmented metropolitan centre. Thus Huntington's texts are inordinately divided between a tacit valorization of democracy as a universal idea and, contradictorily, a rejection of universalism in favour of a multi-civilizational world order.

This last view is perhaps Huntington's defining vision of post cold war IR, having been enunciated in his 1993 article, "The Clash of Civilizations?,"⁶⁶ substantiated in his book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*,⁶⁷ and continuously reiterated in numerous essays thereafter. The clash of civilization thesis appears to be most memorable because it seeks so intently to rewrite the theoretical bases of IR. For example, mainstream IR has, until the end of the cold war, founded itself on the unassailable presence of the sovereign state and the enduring bipolar world order. Under such a system Huntington perceives that international conflict is divided along ideological lines with states, regardless of their cultural or ethnic affinities, falling among the American, Soviet, or non-aligned camps. Such a version of realism has become unsupportable in the last decade and with the dissolution of grand ideological structures, states group themselves around five or seven core civilizations. In brief, the idea of the sovereign state or the structure of the international state system has not entirely collapsed but has found new

⁶⁶Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72.3 (1993): 22-49.

⁶⁷Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

multipolar bearings in civilizational alignments. As Huntington surmises, most of the world's conflicts will occur between these civilizations.

It is too easy to dismiss Huntington's "new" theory of international conflict as an example of mainstream solipsism. While there have been numerous attacks by opposing quarters on the simplicity of Huntington's views, I contend that much of his work has been misappreciated. For instance he has been regarded as toying with a neoconservative, isolationist line, or falling into a US policymaking stance calling for new enemies to be manufactured out of Islam and the Middle East (i.e. the "Green Peril"). Interestingly Edward Said has also joined the fray, citing Huntington as having too facile a view on the nature of culture and civilizations, entities that should rightly be understood as hybrid and dynamic.⁶⁸ Many of these criticisms are valid on their own terms but fail to identify a type of Conradian ambivalence existing in Huntington's writings. In other words, he possesses a moral stance that resembles a form of conscious criticism of imperialism. But instead this is effectively enveloped by imperialism's self-reflective tendencies.

In this connection Huntington's apparent anti-imperialist ideas can be noticed on three broad accounts. First he appears, at times, to be so conscious about the enduring effects of imperialism and, in particular, implicates the US for perpetuating it in the postwar era. With the end of the cold war, Huntington upholds, there has been a desire on the part of the US to make the world as unipolar as possible, forcing the rest of the world to accommodate to its political leadership. While it pursues an active policy of isolating "rogue regimes" (countries like Libya, Syria, Iraq, and North Korea that constantly contravene the wishes of the "international community"), Huntington inverts the term to the US, branding it as the "rogue

⁶⁸Edward W. Said, Afterword, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995 [1978]) 348-349.

superpower.”⁶⁹ Moreover imperialism for Huntington is more than just physical and material, it is also built on different ways of representing otherness. Hence he agrees with Said’s ideas about the lasting legacy of Orientalism and the arbitrariness of constructs like “East” and “West,” “Europe” and the “Orient,”⁷⁰ while noting the importance of otherness in the formulation of an American national identity.⁷¹ Furthermore he also uses the term, civilization, with some caution, paying heed to its value-ladenness and its specific imperial use in reinforcing the image of a superior west contrasted with the barbaric, primitive non-west.⁷² As such Huntington makes a preference for the plural over the singular sense of the word, conceiving civilizations as certain cultural or national groupings.⁷³

Second he is also aware of the dangers of universalism and he sees this distinctively as a ploy by the US (and the west) as a narrow-minded worldview, a matter of deliberate strategic positioning, or a move to propagate its values. This attempt to universalize flies in the face of positivist data (which he presents) in terms of language, creed, religion and so on that show American culture and values to represent a tiny fraction of the world.⁷⁴ Instead such universalism is, in part, the mistaken assumption that because of the widespread use of English, application of technology, common (American) popular culture, and the pervasiveness of the media, the world was becoming more of a single or unified place.⁷⁵ Indeed, scattered

⁶⁹Samuel P. Huntington, “The Lonely Superpower,” *Foreign Affairs* 78.2 (1999): 40–44.

⁷⁰Huntington, *The Clash of the Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 33.

⁷¹Samuel P. Huntington, “The Erosion of American National Interests,” *Foreign Affairs* 76.5 (1997): 29–32.

⁷²Huntington, *The Clash of the Civilizations* 40–41.

⁷³Huntington, *The Clash of the Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 43.

⁷⁴See especially Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 59–66.

⁷⁵Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 66–68.

across *Clash of Civilizations* one finds such decrying of universalism as, “What is universalism to the west is imperialism to the rest,”⁷⁶ or “imperialism is the necessary logical consequence of universalism.”⁷⁷ On a more somber note Huntington sees such assertions of universalism as downright dangerous, having the propensity of triggering a multi-civilizational war.

Third, the most striking account of Huntington’s critique of imperialism is his bizarre vision of a resurgent and revanchist non-west. With their political voices and independence suppressed under the totalizing and monolithic structure of the cold war, the non-western states are, for the first time in international political history, capable of challenging the hegemony of the west. For him this is the “true” multipolar and multi-civilizational moment in which the “three worlds” system has become unraveled.⁷⁸ This burgeoning power of the non-west is witnessed in contradistinction to the west’s inevitable dwindling command of the world. As a result, any attempt to propagate universal values has been and will continue to be met by stern opposition. Paradoxically if the US desires to build a unipolar international order with the rest of the world gravitating around it, Huntington surmises, it would have an entirely opposite effect since it would further sensitize the non-west and lead to greater multipolarity and fragmentation.⁷⁹

Such understandings of imperialism may appear to be keen and penetrating. Moreover the representations of the non-west also seem to be generous and accommodating. Unfortunately Huntington is never consistent in his views on international/foreign affairs. It is therefore appropriate to say if Huntington has a

⁷⁶Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 184.

⁷⁷Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 310.

⁷⁸Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 21–29.

⁷⁹Huntington, “The Lonely Superpower” 36–37.

particular set of anti-imperialist visions, then he also has a corresponding set of ideas that oppose each of them. Scholars and thinkers do change their minds many times in their careers, yet Huntington belies any transitional movement from one idea to the next. Instead his worldviews vacillate backwards and forwards across a range of texts (over a period of a decade or so) and also within each given text. Typically in 1991 Huntington published *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. This book quintessentially celebrates the “third wave” of democracy spreading dramatically around the world, effectually adopting the triumphalist fervour of American democratic universalism.⁸⁰ Yet in his later texts Huntington outwardly rejects any form of universalism but refuses to abandon the beneficence of modernity or the privileged role of the west. What appears to be an outright rejection of universalism, for instance, becomes suspiciously a way of preventing the uniqueness of western culture from getting lost.

For a scholar of Huntington’s stature this vacillation in views has been greeted by numerous attacks, expressing exasperation on how his contradictions could be reconciled. Writing in “The Clash of Samuel Huntingtons” Jacob Heilbrunn finds it difficult to understand how such conflicts of opinion could occur, but resolves them by indicating that Huntington’s clash of civilizations is probably erroneous and that the real problem lies with the Harvard professor himself. As Heilbrunn notes, “there is no multicultural clash, no uniquely Asian democracy, and no grand clash of civilizations. But there are two Huntingtons. And the real clash is between them.”⁸¹ But in a display of logocentric rationalism Heilbrunn’s critique can be expected. After all he writes from an academic perspective that cannot tolerate internal

⁸⁰Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

⁸¹Jacob Heilbrunn, “The Clash of Samuel Huntingtons,” *The American Prospect* 39 (1998): 28. See also Jacob Heilbrunn, “Huntington’s Disease,” *The New Republic* 8 Dec. 1997: 4, 49.

contradictions and ironies, and also from a cultural milieu that is also very emotionally charged (the subliminal belief in the essentialism of American values). If this tension in Huntington seeks to be investigated, then what are its likely sources and can they be understood within a strictly delineated context? Surely this vacillation must arise out of so many disjunctures determining the way his texts are produced, namely between the utilitarian need for actual foreign policy practice and the “objectivity” of academic description, or between some niggling, underlying personal dogma and an increasingly fragmenting intellectual landscape? I do not seek to provide an explanation for Huntington’s contradictory views but emphasize on locating him—in the same way as Conrad—in an ambivalent structure of colonial desire. That is to say, within the context of otherness, both assimilation and differentiation of the other are flip sides of an imperial power relations. And in terms of the “mission” both firm support for empire and the trenchant criticisms of imperialism are disjunctively one and the same. Ultimately, regardless of the seeming anti-imperialism of Huntington’s IR, the resulting image of the west is usually one that is dynamic, enduring, and ascendant. As Samir Amin has argued, Huntington’s obsession with “civilizations” and their cognate, “culturalism” in no way provides a position whereby one could speak of an original, primeval culture that can be celebrated as being “non-western.” To articulate any notion of culture and civilization is to once again embed it within a particular history, unproblematic form of essentialism, and predefined methods of categorization. Amin makes this point:

Theories of cultural specificity are usually disappointing because they are based on the prejudice that differences are always decisive, while similarities are the result only of coincidence. The desired results of that enterprise are obtained, a priori, on this basis. The differences adduced betray the banality of the reflection involved. To say, as Samuel Huntington does in his famous article *Clash of Civilizations*, that these differences are fundamental because they involve domains defining “relations between human beings, and God, Nature, Power,” is at one and the same time to reduce cultures to religions, and to suppose that

each culture develops specific fixed concepts of the relations in question in the categories predetermined by Huntington.⁸²

It follows then that Amin's criticism of Huntington's culturalism is that it implicitly extends the project of imperialism.

Instead of starting with the Clash of the Civilizations texts as a juncture to locate Huntington, I would like to examine three different articles and from there return to the aforementioned works. These articles are, "The U.S.—Decline or Renewal?," "The Erosion of National Interests," and "The Lonely Superpower," published in 1988, 1997, and 1999 respectively in the policy journal, *Foreign Affairs*. Underlying these articles is a consistent anxiety about America's potential decline, and it is this anxiety that provides the basis for the Clash of Civilizations thesis. The time range of these articles is sufficient to reveal that Huntington has, for many years, been concerned with the world role of the United States and especially with the composition of its power resource base, the expenditure of that power, and the domestic social integrity needed for that structure. In 1988 Huntington sought to engage a debate called "declinism," which was emerging in intellectual, professional, and policy circles. With the Wall Street crash of October 1987, the publication of Paul Kennedy's *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, and the potentially competitive Japanese economy, many individuals were worried that America's hegemonic position was inevitably spiraling downwards. Using a combination of positivist data and a mysterious faith in American exceptionalism, Huntington sought to debunk the declinists, stressing that the US was different from the former great powers and that it had the innate capacity to renew itself.⁸³

⁸²Samir Amin, "Imperialism and Culturalism Complement Each Other," *Monthly Review* 48.2 (1996): n. pag., Expanded Academic ASAP International Ed. Online.

⁸³Samuel P. Huntington, "The U.S.—Decline or Renewal?," *Foreign Affairs* 67.2 (1988/89): 76–96.

According to Huntington it was thus premature to talk about America's decline in 1988. But the Huntington of the late 1990s is different, this time tacitly affirming that US hegemony is indeed becoming compromised and will inevitably be buffeted around by a resurgent multi-civilizational world. "The Erosion of National Interests" will perhaps be remembered more as an illustration of certain (possibly) neoconservative views in the US than for any scholarly insight. Indeed, the essay is embellished with innumerable references to threats from within and without; that the US can no longer cohesively express its national interests because multiculturalists have taken over the running of the country and are depriving it of its Anglo-Saxon core, an identity that has for centuries served to shape a coherent national identity as well as a sense of foreign policy purpose.⁸⁴ This destruction of a common culture and rejection of assimilation has become fragmentary, encouraging myriad of foreign interests to determine the course of US foreign policy. As Huntington anticipates these ideas in the *Clash of Civilizations*,

The American multiculturalists... reject their country's cultural heritage. Instead of attempting to identify the United States with another civilization, however, they wish to create a country of many civilizations, which is to say a country not belonging to any civilization and lacking a cultural core. History shows that no country so constituted can long endure as a coherent society. A multicivilizational United States will not be the United States; it will be the United Nations.⁸⁵

Huntington's anxiety can therefore be captured in one word—dewesternization—and the fear thereof subsequently.⁸⁶

This consternation trickles down to "The Lonely Superpower" published in 1999. While this essay is more heavily versed in the classical language of international relations, discussing alignments, polarity, and power, there is nonetheless an affinity with his earlier and more polemical piece. In this essay

⁸⁴Huntington, "The Erosion of National Interests" 28–29; 33–35.

⁸⁵Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 306.

⁸⁶Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 307.

Huntington draws heavily on the clash of civilizations ideas in envisioning the world as fragmented along cultural and civilizational faultlines. The method of interaction among states and their fundamental structure are basically intact. As such the world is still understood to revolve around the assertion of power, bandwagoning, and polarity.⁸⁷ Huntington's concern here typically focuses on the United States' role in it and divides his analysis between two cardinal positions, how America⁸⁸ perceives of its global responsibility as an extension of some divine or natural order and how the World actually responds to it. Thus at the surface Huntington's objective seems to be practical advice to the policy community: the American obsession with creating a unipolar world is counterproductive as it strengthens the increasing global opposition to American hegemony. What passes as an attack on the quixotic self-construction of the US as the "benign hegemon," the "first nonimperialist superpower"⁸⁹ eventuates as a subliminal and profound concern for a better way of dispensing American power. Consider this segment:

In the unipolar moment at the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was often able to impose its will on other countries. The moment has passed. The two principal tools of coercion that the United States now attempts to use are economic sanctions and military intervention. Sanctions work, however, only when other countries also support them, and that is decreasingly the case. Hence, the United States either applies them unilaterally to the detriment of its economic interests and its relations with its allies, or it does not enforce them, in which case they become symbols of American weakness.⁹⁰

If anything, these words convey a sense of regret directed at the current direction of US foreign policy and not necessarily to the idea of American power in itself. In

⁸⁷Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower" 35-37.

⁸⁸Huntington's use of "America" in "The Lonely Superpower" is especially ironic, considering that in the earlier piece, "The Erosion of National Interest," he has denied the possibility of there being a single idea of America. This essentialism seems necessary as Huntington switches over from a highly emotional language to the more structural one revolving around international relations theory. Huntington appears oblivious to this.

⁸⁹Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower" 38.

effect the use of the words, “American weakness” works in the reverse, shedding more insight to a deeper desire for “American power.” As in “The Erosion of National Interests,” “The Lonely Superpower” feeds on the apprehension of the multicivilizational world order but pretends to dispense advice for 21st century policymakers. While Huntington recognizes the anxiety to be a product of so many conflicts, like the increasing external multicultural influence, the inability by the US to deploy power, he still sees a prime role for it as a “lonely superpower” in realistically allowing the world to become multipolar.

Let me now return to the ambivalence of Samuel Huntington and the relationship between his works and imperialism. As discussed in the *Foreign Affairs* essays, Huntington was in the late 1980s and 1990s surrounded by fears and uncertainties of late 20th century America. These include the fragility of its social and cultural composition, an increasingly powerful non-western world, and the doubts about the United States’ capability to act unilaterally and decisively. The writings that emerged out of this complex invariably articulated a sense of loss and disorientation, although they tried to cling to the methodology of the social sciences. Even in the *Clash of Civilizations* Huntington reaches a crucial point on the concept of western power. On the one hand it continues to project a disproportionate amount of influence on the world today through international institutions, its technological capabilities, and its economic preponderance, yet Huntington is convinced that this is met by increasing non-western opposition on the other hand. As a result he is forced to confront this question: is western power declining or perennially resurgent? Huntington arrives at a hybrid (or is it indecisive) position stressing that it is both.⁹¹ Moreover Huntington’s anti-imperialism had to give way to an underlying praxis of

⁹⁰ Huntington, “The Lonely Superpower,” 39.

⁹¹ Huntington, *The Clash of the Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 82.

the work. This can be framed as a different question: if the world did clash on civilizational lines, what must the west do in order to remain a vital part of world politics? Huntington's concluding chapter seals the overall focus of the book and warns that the west must avoid the horrors of dewesternization. It had to renew itself.⁹²

There is also another element to Huntington's ambivalence, and this is the inability to transcend the self-referential and circular logic of language. In other words, he writes within a tradition that presumes the neutrality and objectivity of language without realizing that its delineated aspects are part of a larger scheme of western cultural production. As a result Huntington's work is reduced to a matter of categorization in which each entity is distinct and separate from the other. The decline of western civilization, for example, is divided into territory, population, economic product, and military capability.⁹³ Furthermore what is more notable is his separation of modernization from westernization. And it is this point that proves to be most baffling. Because of the way language is structured, Huntington can claim that westernization is separate because culture is essentially separate (from science, commercialism, politics), and it is possible for societies to modernize but not westernize. Here is an example of this delineation:

Somewhere in the Middle East a half dozen young men could well be dressed in jeans, drinking Coke, listening to rap, and, between bows to Mecca be putting together a bomb to blow up an American airliner. During the 1970s and 1980s Americans consumed millions of Japanese cars, TV sets, cameras, and electronic gadgets without being "Japanized" and indeed while becoming considerably more antagonistic toward Japan.⁹⁴

Huntington overlooks the fact that this is an example of disjuncture and not delineation between westernization and modernization. As a matter of fact it further

⁹²Huntington, *The Clash of the Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, esp. ch. 12.

⁹³Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 83-91.

⁹⁴Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 58.

fuels the notion that the west is now a victim of its own successes, because if modernization was propagated through imperialism then much of the anti-western opposition today is an indirect result of this. Ironically Huntington believes typically that the power of the west is being relatively reduced because modernization has empowered the non-west.⁹⁵ If such a delineation were to be maintained it could only come as a self-serving need to legitimize Huntington's theories. In other words either Huntington is oblivious to the complexity of language in itself or that the westernization-modernization split is needed to demonstrate the increasing anti-western backlash that has come through highly technical and structural means.

And What of Post Cold War International Relations?

Joseph Conrad and Samuel Huntington may have been writers separated by geography, time, and genre but this chapter read their works in light of their relationship with imperialism. There is something uncanny about them since their writings appear so conscious about the image of the west, the constitution of imperialism, the moral problems associated with colonial systems of representation, and their struggle to present a worldview different from their contemporaries. In spite of this their works form a tenuous bond with imperialism because the linguistic structures, implicit concern for European or Euro-American fragmentation works surreptitiously to revive the figure of the west. What is one to make of this? Both Conrad and Huntington are very good examples of the disjunctures of colonial discourse. In moments of crisis and transformation where it appears that imperialism on the verge of dissolution their writings reaffirm that it is still very much alive and operating in far more subversive levels than one can easily observe. In a word the effects of the ambivalent economy of desire that negotiates the tensions in the

⁹⁵Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* 78.

representation of otherness and the presentation of rationale for domination I call the “mission.”

As far as post cold war international relations is concerned, both Conrad and Huntington exemplify that the crises texts face and their division into varying and sometimes opposing interpretations work within a dialectical framework that is part of western domination. We may see this as colonial discourse’s wide tolerance for internal dissent. There are undoubtedly many more views about post cold war IR beyond Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations.” First, as elaborated in one of the opening quotes to this chapter, is the all-encompassing ahistoricity of political structures. This is a neorealist viewpoint that perceives of a transcendent international state structure that subsumes any possibility of human agency to alter the conflictual nature of states. Even if the cold war has ended, the chaotic and anarchic nature of the structure predisposes the world to perennial hostility and war. Hence the future could even be more dangerous. John Mearsheimer is a proponent of this view. Second, there are the triumphalists who see the collapse of Soviet-style socialism as indicative of the victory of universal (read western) liberalism. This liberalism or its correlate of liberal democracy is the final form in the evolution of human philosophy. These triumphalists subsequently pontificate that history has all but ended. Third, and as a consequence of more effective means of travel and mass communications, the world is becoming more unified. This is the process of globalization in which wars are no longer fought in battlefields but in marketplaces, where there is increased consumption in a presumably central culture. But there are also variants of globalization, and Thomas Friedman’s division of the world between a consumerist one and a revanchist one is one of the more recent.⁹⁶

⁹⁶Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (London: HarperCollins, 1999).

These visions of post cold war IR may have significant differences but the central structure is essentially the same. All of them rely on universalism in order for their worldviews to be recognized as truthful and correct. The neorealists assume that the effacement of human agency and the state system are universal experiences. Yet the latter is obviously an effect of formal decolonization while the former is a solipsism of the social sciences. Both triumphalists and globalists also see a political median point—liberalism for the former and common culture for the latter—around which the world will revolve. Yet these are also aspects of the larger Euro-American influence. Such views have already been critiqued by Huntington, and it was therefore appropriate that Huntington's work, in turn, be reviewed as a cluster of dynamic texts tied to imperialism and the post cold war world.

Chapter Six

“HUMILIATING REDESCRIPTIONS” *Postmodernist International Relations and the Ambivalent Search for the Other*

Ironism, as I have defined it, results from awareness of the power of redescription. But most people do not want to be redescribed. They want to be taken on their own terms—taken seriously just as they are and just as they talk. The ironist tells them that the language they speak is up for grabs by her and her kind. There is something potentially cruel about that claim. For the best way to cause people long-lasting pain is to humiliate them by making the things that seemed most important to them look futile, obsolete, and powerless.... The redescriving ironist, by threatening one's final vocabulary, and thus one's ability to make sense of oneself in one's own terms rather than hers, suggests that one's self and one's world are futile, obsolete, *powerless*. Redescription often humiliates.

Richard Rorty¹

The contention of this thesis is that late twentieth century imperialism has functioned more disjunctively as an element of colonial desire than as an overt and systematic form of western domination. This means that unlike its earlier incarnations when it consisted in both the physical control of land and people as well as the domination of cultural and knowledge production, it is today more subversive, less easily detected, incommensurable, and vacillates between certain moral choices. As was discussed in earlier chapters the notions of domination, appropriation, and occupation of the non-western worlds were often juxtaposed undecidedly with the necessities of civilization, the construction of metropolitan patriotism, the consequences of cultural

¹Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 89–90.

fragmentation, and the anxieties of hegemonic decline. Thus as academic work in the west becomes more conscious of the travesties of imperialism, it is usually accompanied by the horrendously difficult question of whether or not such awareness also dismantles the cultural system on which these disciplines are founded.

In the 1980s and 1990s such critical consciousness has variously fallen under the rubric of postmodernism, postmodernity, and poststructuralism. What these “posts” refer to is perennially unsettled because they seek to destabilize the very structures of knowledge one is accustomed to, such as definitions, disciplinary boundaries, instrumental rationality, positivist research methods, and the possibility of objective “reality.” Generally speaking they claim to break away from the cultural, aesthetic, and philosophical underpinnings of the more traditional movements like modernism and modernity. Thus rather than the result or object-driven approach of mainstream scholarship, postmodernist humanities and social sciences lend themselves to difference, play, irony, metatheory, and metanarratives. The purpose behind this is split between two incommensurable positions. First contrary to its opponents’ accusations of relativism, postmodernism is political. It possesses, as Bryan Turner stresses, a “new vision of social justice”² that remains culturally undecidable. This position holds that virtually every aspect of modernity is an exclusive and strategic stronghold of the White, male, bourgeois subject (what Audre Lourde calls the “master subject”³) masquerading as ideas that are universally applicable. As a result any position that is not white, male or bourgeois is immediately rejected as irrational, false, or incorrect, effectively silencing modernity’s “other” and substituting much of his or her beliefs with those of the master subject’s.

²Bryan S. Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism, and Globalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 11.

³Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansberg: Crossing Press, 1984) 110–113.

The postmodernist attempt to discredit the narrowness of modernity therefore emerges in the following ways:

- *The celebration of difference.* There is no longer just one point of view, but all knowledge, truth, reality must now be considered in the plural sense, and all identities become paramount to the production of knowledge. This gives rise to the category called “otherness” and while the other remains terminologically marginalized, its reconstituted presence seeks to be strategic.
- *The refusal of grand narratives.* Everyone, every identity has a unique story or a different take on who he or she is and how he or she has come to be. Modernity has presented a totalizing narrative, for example, in the way it deals with the history of the world or inaugurates a universally applicable research agenda. This must be replaced by narratives that coexist rather than by those that subsume each other.
- *Science, representation, and language.* Just as modernity has its preferred narrative, its preferred method of rationalization is through positivist science, upholding how certain knowledge is validated and how others are rejected. Postmodernism creates a different agenda which refuses the “objective reality” that materializes as a result of the scientific method. It gives deference to textuality (knowledge of all that is real is not in itself but mediated through texts and language) and that all forms of representation are vested with interests.

There are undoubtedly more elements to postmodernism’s political agenda, but for now these revolve around the need to establish ways of recovering the other. But the principles and ethics behind such a recovery are contingent because they are unable to locate it in a language that is not already part of modernity. Thus even if the recovery of the other smacks of the projects behind western liberal egalitarianism, it

refuses to relegate it to this, stressing that the ethics cannot presently be articulated. For imperialism, postmodernism provides a consciousness in which the continued project of empire is understood to be more profound than overt forms of colonialism and the physical imposition of western institutions and forms of governance over non-western peoples. In effect postmodernism allows imperialism to be critical about the widespread effacement of identities, cultures, and imaginations with totalizing discourses of the white master subject.

Whether or not postmodernism provides a more productive way of observing imperialism is still dubious since it also has another facet that is culturally restrictive. In this sense the second position of postmodernism is not so aligned to philosophical speculations but to actual productions of “high” or “popular” culture. This is the compunction by people, when looking at a piece of art or architecture, or after having read a novel or watched a movie, to remark, “my, isn’t that postmodernist.” Such a position does not merely have to be simply a reaction to deliberately-created objects but also the cultural production of quotidian and routine habits of different subjects. Hence a walk in the city,⁴ the person in an art gallery, youths in a video arcade become relentlessly assimilated into different forms of signification, and in the context of the technology, simulation, hyperreality, and acceleration of western society become instances of postmodern culture.⁵ Quite appropriately Said has referred to this as an aestheticization in which postmodernism is separated from the non-European world, divorced from any history, and obsessed with its own

⁴Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁵See also Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 1988). Here Baudrillard attempts to record the mundane, repetitive, taken-for-granted trivialities of American society and to read them as cultural production.

“aesthetic of quotation, nostalgia, and indifferenciation.”⁶ The reason why this position sits uncomfortably with the ethical drive of postmodernism is that while the former tries so hard to divest itself of any cultural solipsism the latter is a more ambivalent creature, promoting postmodernism as a cultural movement of late-industrial, western(ized) societies. After all it is laughable to assume that producers of postmodern culture like Gore Vidal, Samuel Beckett, the designer of Los Angeles’ Bounaventure Hotel, Ridley Scott, or the ficto-historicism of Normal Mailer will have immediate affinity with the people in the ghettos of New York, let alone the average person in non-western countries. When exported to non-western cultures this aspect of postmodernism cannot but induce continued disorientation and cultural loss.

These two aspects of postmodernism cannot be seen as separate and although there is a distinction between postmodernism in the first instance and postmodernity in the latter, both are intricately interwoven. Let me explain the disjuncture of these two positions through Ziauddin Sardar’s *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture*. Sardar’s book seeks to address the continued inflection of imperialism in so many incarnations of postmodernism in the west: culture, science, religion, consumption, and so on. He particularly sees postmodernism as disingenuous about its ethical claims of creating space for alterity but instead finds it a more absolute form of domination,⁷ seeking to consume the other through an assortment of philosophy and culture valorizing plurality. As Sardar writes:

While postmodernism is a legitimate protest against the excesses of suffocating modernity, instrumental rationality and authoritarian traditionalism, it has itself become a universal ideology that kills

⁶Edward W. Said, “Representing the Colonized: .Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” *Critical Inquiry* 15.2 (1989): 222. See also Anne Maxwell, “The Debate on Current Theories of Colonial Discourse,” *Kunapipi* 13.3 (1991): 74–75.

⁷Ziauddin Sardar, *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture* (London and Chicago: Pluto Press, 1998) 15.

everything that gives meaning and depth to the life of non-western individuals and societies. It represents a partial displacement from repression to seduction, from the police to the market, from the army to the bank, from the depth reading of epistemology to a surface reading of hermeneutics. If postmodernism had a slogan it would be 'anything goes'; but when 'anything goes', everything stays and expediency guides thought and action. Postmodernism preserves—indeed enhances—all the classical and modern structures of oppression and domination.⁸

Now if one reads Sardar with distinct interpretations of postmodernist philosophy and postmodern culture in mind, it would appear that the book conflates these two positions and elevates virtually all cultural productions coming from the west as "postmodern." For instance he mentions so many tokens of western culture—McDonald's, Walt Disney's *Pocahontas*, the Body Shop, Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*—as postmodern and interpolates them as both indicative of postmodernism's ethical reconsiderations and as aesthetic forms heralding the creation of a new type of western cultural identity. In each of these examples there is an irreconcilable split; all of them do represent an aspect of western cultural dominance through globalized consumption or the appropriation of non-western narratives. But some of them are also symbols of a form resistance to stories that must otherwise be told according to certain set ways.⁹ One may easily disagree with Sardar's examples as being postmodern but it is also difficult to dismiss the work as a desperate attempt to totalize postmodernism as eschatology. For Sardar the existence and essentialism of non-western cultures, and their interaction with the west always remains prior to language and knowledge. As such there cannot be a

⁸Sardar 13–14.

⁹For instance Sardar examines Disney's *Pocahontas* as a very different colonial narrative that no longer portrays the White settlement of the New World as a noble venture. In this "postmodern historicism" (88) the characters are split between the archetypal colonizing villain portrayed by Ratcliffe and the more accommodating hero, John Smith. Even the otherwise silent Pocahontas becomes the indomitable heroine refusing the typecasting of native Americans as being barbaric or savage. This explicit denial of a "self" in which the narrative swings now promotes every character as being an "other." However this cartoon is unable to pull away from the tacit conservatism of Walt Disney and inevitably returns to an essential morals governing mainstream society, like political correctness and multiculturalism (88–108).

free-floating and contingent philosophy or culture that mediates. Any move to fragment postmodernism into ethics or culture is excoriated as a deliberate strategy of imperial self-absolution. Hence in identifying postmodernism as a grand imperial scheme Sardar replicates the lack of translation between west and non-west. As Rey Chow argues this problem of how non-west fits into the schema of postmodernism results because of the “modernism-postmodernism problematic.”¹⁰ Because modernism’s notions of progress and historicism are already so globally integrated, the First World’s ascension into postmodernity leaves the Third World still struggling to cope with modernity. Hence postmodernism still inevitably juxtaposes a historicism in which the west celebrates its arrival at a new level of critical consciousness while forcing the Third World to live through modernity “as cultural trauma and devastation.”¹¹

If postmodernism is upheld by its proponents as having a new conceptual edge over the understanding of imperial power and knowledge, the disjuncture that straddle between these two positions raises a number of serious issues. Do the concepts of postmodernism, poststructuralism, and postmodernity represent completely new cultural, social, aesthetic, and intellectual developments? To what extent do they parallel or produce the social and political problems in the places they inhabit? And with this in mind do they universalize these as problems (like those of modernity) confronting all of humanity? Similarly are they resolutely western in design and do they, or should they, have more worldwide appeal? These are undoubtedly questions that have set the “postmodernist debate” over the last two decades and there are many texts addressing these concerns. These problems are mentioned somewhat rhetorically because they continue to demonstrate the

¹⁰Rey Chow, “Postmodern Automaton,” *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 102.

ambivalent moral anxieties of the west to protect its cultural core and remain ascendant in the face of the internal, self-reflexive outrage against imperialism, racism, and sexism. In a more particular way the texts that this thesis focuses on—those belonging to the discipline of international relations—seem to follow this moral, cultural, and intellectual path. For in the late 1980s and 1990s, IR (along with other social sciences) began to come under postmodernist revision. At the outset the opposition was against positivist methodology but soon came to incorporate a broad and decentred agenda. This involved the ethical problem of difference and otherness, the location of women and construction of gender in IR, the role of simulation in war and diplomacy, the centrality of language and textuality, and the primacy of identity in foreign policy. In general these new approaches attempted to create a new space for different subjectivities and perspectives to be inserted into the discipline. But what does this signify for imperialism, and are postmodernist IR texts imperialist?

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to extend the argument that contemporary imperialism has potentially some of the most subversive and ambivalent inflections in IR. More specifically this chapter argues that although postmodernist IR has the capacity to provide critical consciousness in deconstructing the “grand narratives” of the discipline’s mainstream thus positioning the other as a recoverable subject, it does not go far enough and subsequently lapses into the undecidable and irresolvable anxieties of colonial desire. In other words postmodernist IR harbours a utilitarian and political purpose in providing a more inclusive and productive way of studying global politics, but in so doing ambivalently treads on its own interest in being an ethically self-conscious discourse. I stress that this problem strongly parallels postmodernism in general but leans very closely to the pragmatic variant embodied by Richard Rorty. Admittedly most postmodernist IR

¹¹Chow 103.

scholars claim to be heavily influenced by French intellectuals like Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Baudrillard, and few mention Rorty or any of his intellectual forebears' (Charles Pierce, William James, and John Dewey) works. Yet postmodernist IR's resemblance to pragmatic postmodernism is more than coincidental. Just as Rorty's pragmatism marries contingent, critical, and postmodernist positions with the necessities of patriotism, bourgeois liberalism, American exceptionalism, and democratic solidarity, postmodernist IR vacillates between the contingent positions of identity and representation, and the necessity of disciplinary progress.

To attempt the above this chapter first discusses the arrival of postmodernism¹² in the literature of international relations. It introduces some of the more groundbreaking texts and discusses how they attempted to depart from the canonicity of realist IR to create a ground that was conscious of solipsism, positivism, and cultural identities. It also discusses some of the entrenched difficulties it faces with respect to a western cultural nuance and how otherness is reconciled. In the following section I argue that the postmodernism adopted by these critical IR scholars¹³ is not

¹²The terms, postmodernism, postmodernity, and poststructuralism, have to this point been used variably. As mentioned there is tremendous conceptual difficulty in stating what they are because their very inception resists modernity's need for definitions and conceptual boundaries. Nonetheless there have been a number of understandings concerning their use. All of these are reactions to the numerous aspects of modernity such as the Enlightenment, rationality, notion of progress and so on. But since modernity is so all encompassing, directing all aspects of western or westernized life it permeates into knowledge, culture, intellectualism, to name a few. Postmodernism is therefore the cultural and (post) philosophical movement as a collective project, whereas postmodernity is the social, technological condition emanating from life in late-industrial societies. See for instance David Lyon, *Postmodernity* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994) 6. Poststructuralism, while enveloped within the postmodern refers more specifically to exceeding structural ideas like those introduced by Claude Levi-Strauss. It attempts to inculcate a different conception to the way one looks at language, texts, and representation and how they shape reality and subjectivity. Since all three are interrelated, confining them to individual categories could be dangerous, as I have argued through Ziauddin Sardar's book. It is this disjuncture that forces me to be unsystematic in the use of "postmodernism" and wherever it is referenced in this chapter, I have this problem in mind.

¹³The notion, postmodernist IR scholars, is not without its conceptual problems. Most IR scholars producing writings about postmodernist IR do not necessarily identify themselves as "postmodernist." There is, in this regard, a preference for the more heterogeneous and inclusive term, "critical," that incorporates among others, postmodernism, poststructuralism,

necessarily a set of “views from nowhere” but are intricately connected to the revisionism now sweeping through the Anglo-American academy. As such, that which produced postmodernist IR, also gave rise to the pragmatic postmodernism of Richard Rorty. Here my intention is to address the difficult mutual-assimilation of American pragmatism and postmodernism and to claim that the ethnocentricity produced as a result instantiates the disjuncture of western imperialism; that deeper and more complicated consciousness about problems of domination and hegemony is accompanied by ever more resurgent needs of staying relevant. After which I reexamine postmodernist IR projects and the dialogue that surfaces between their proponents and opponents. In particular this refers to the strategies adopted by postmodernist scholars to reify realism as a monolithic entity belies an inability for realists to communicate effectively with their critics. This failure to communicate derives from the insistence that “strategic essentialism” is important for the recovery of the other. Yet there is no similar treatment for the other, leaving it intangible and irrecoverable.

Postmodernism, International Relations, and the Crisis of Modernity

For many years, when people spoke about the “power of international relations,” they were almost always referring to the discipline’s descriptive and analytical power. In brief they understood that the discipline served inordinately well in explaining and accounting for certain political developments in the world as well as to predict what was likely to happen. In recent times, however, there has been a fundamental

postcolonialism, colonial discourse theory, feminism, neo-Marxism. By doing so these scholars may demonstrate a preference in some instances for postmodernism, but may also agree with somewhat opposing positions like Frankfurt School critical theory and feminism. The use of “postmodernist IR scholars” in this chapter does not intend to absolutize the political and intellectual positions of these academics. When reference is made to them I am referring to a particular set of texts and the arguments raised by their authors in their defence.

transformation to what this means. IR's power was no longer an a priori, intrinsic capability, as much as it was an exclusive, partisan, and particularistic social phenomenon that had been extremely successful in masquerading as a set of universal ideas. It was in effect emblematic of certain institutional characteristics: it signified the totalizing power of the Anglo-American academy; its most important texts were written by White, middle to upper-middle class men; it enjoyed tremendous appeal in undergraduate political science courses; and in the context of the cold war it was one of the most vital tools in understanding the dangerous world "out there." Such form of power is not necessarily a conscious or deliberate strategy of deception but is more appropriately a result of IR being embedded in the cultural and intellectual project of modernity. As a result the power of IR is ascribed with modernity's production of global political consciousness. For example modernity's embracing of Enlightenment rationality enforces a system of delineations like the necessity of boundaries and dualisms. Thus IR does not accept any "gray areas" but forces one to make a choice between these binary pairs: war/peace, realism/liberalism, domestic order/international chaos, security/insecurity, and so on. Moreover rationality also legitimizes certain events with purpose and meaning via the actions of sovereign states. Hence an action like Iraq's invasion of Kuwait is interpreted as rational if it was done to seize the latter's territory and oil production (a resource-maximizing action) and irrational if done without considering the possibility of western punitive response. Modernity also becomes complicit with IR in many other ways, namely through positivism and empiricism as the only ways to validate truth in the international realm, and through the use of language as capable of representing objective reality.

This complicity between modernity and the power of IR is most pronounced when they are viewed as disjunctive elements that ambiguously promote cultural

particularism while also possessing a mechanism to convert that particularity into universal practice. This complicity is invested in one word, realism. As subjects whose identities and imaginations have been constituted by modernity, we are coerced into valorizing a certain way of understanding reality as the way in which truth and knowledge are sought. And all without realizing its cultural slant and dismissing its ambiguity. In international relations the most dominant and successful interpretive lens used is political realism. In spite of its denotations of the “real” and “reality,” political realism is a series of particular western philosophical premises about man’s behaviour in a society of limited resources, and about the difficulty in being altruistic and moral. Following a line of thought from Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau, political realism pessimistically upholds the innately selfish, greedy, and self-maximizing nature of man. Adapting much from these principles IR’s political realists extrapolate this “nature” of man onto the image of the sovereign state, forming a double in which states seek to maximize their power, protect their interests, refuse to cooperate, and create an image of a world where anarchy, belligerence, and distrust prevail. This subordinates contending philosophical visions of reality to a more pressing and deliberate reality of a constructed international system. Political realism, however, does not end there. In effect it is intricately interwoven with another system of realism that shares a common system of rationality, and for our purposes we shall call it epistemic or positivist realism. Just as political realism claims to have discovered the “real” essence of human nature, epistemic realism upholds that reality exists outside the consciousness of individuals, that it is capable being grasped and understood, and that it is only through positivist methods that truth can be validated. Thus knowledge about the international world is, as Morgenthau would say, it is “real, and it is

profound.”¹⁴ All its components like sovereign states, institutions, diplomatic activities, and various forms of exchange are not reflected upon as constructed entities but as real world objects not needing further proof or explanation. But it is in the fusion with political realism that epistemic realism attains its most ambivalent status since, in many cases, the latter uses the former as the foundation for its assumptions. In other words the development of scientific or quantitative IR may have aimed at steering the discipline away from its more traditional and hermeneutical orientations by introducing research methods and statistical computations that one finds in the physical sciences. While the objective is to produce an IR that more accurately depicts the international system, it cannot escape a culturally created core. Thus this fusion with science increasingly positions IR scholars further and further away from the “original” insertion of western philosophical values.

While such forms of disciplinary power have been a perennial feature in international relations, a number of interrelated developments between the 1980s and 1990s began to foster a consciousness about that power itself as well as to formulate a resistance to the totalizing complicity between modernity and IR. First of these developments was the intrusion of (largely) French poststructuralism and postmodernism into the Anglo-American humanities and social science academies. Second there was an increasing disenchantment with the positivist method in the social sciences and growing cynicism about the exclusiveness of realist IR. Third the political changes in the former Eastern Bloc countries, the end of the cold war, and Soviet Union’s cooperation in the Persian Gulf War showed how incapable mainstream IR was at predicting or accounting for these. Fourth the overall cultural

¹⁴Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985) 13

crises of modernity, as evidenced from environmental disasters like the accidents at Bhopal and Chernobyl, renewed environmental consciousness, and the prevalence of famine depict the unwillingness of mainstream IR to deal with any issue that was not about power politics or international strategy.¹⁵ These developments subsequently led to a radical rethinking of international relations that had to take into consideration a number of concerns. How is it possible to expose the biases, exclusiveness, and convolution of the discipline without using modernity's innate capacity for self-reprobatation? How does one promote a different academic agenda and still remain recognized as the discipline of international relations? How does one create a language and strategy that speaks against IR's totalizing scope without also being another form of exclusivity?

The result of these reflections has been the ongoing debate about postmodernism in IR. As postmodernism in general defies the attempt to make definitions, it is difficult to state what is postmodern IR. Instead one gets a better sense of postmodern IR by discussing the various projects it undertakes and by its contextual and literary background. Just as the French postmodernist and poststructuralist theories (as well as other forms of continental philosophy) were making significant inroads in the American humanities and social sciences in the early 1980s, younger IR scholars were in the latter part of that decade beginning to incorporate these positions into their work. For instance in 1987 James Der Derian published *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement*. Whether or not this book is postmodernist is open to interpretation, but what is unique about it is its presentation of diplomatic history. This is quite a contrast with say, a modernist work of diplomatic historiography like Henry Kissinger's recent tome, *Diplomacy*. In Der

¹⁵James N. Rosenau, "Superpower Scholars: Sensitive, Submissive, or Self-Deceptive?" *Global Voices: Dialogues in International Relations*, ed. James N. Rosenau (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993) 2-3.

Derian's text there is no sense of a singular narrative, no compulsion to tell diplomatic history as it "really" was, and no mention of the towering geniuses of Metternich, Lloyd George, or Le Duc Tho.¹⁶ Instead all these symptoms of historicism are unaware of the many contending historical "layers" around diplomatic history. To this end Der Derian uses Hegel, Marx, Sartre, Nietzsche, and Foucault's critiques of history to recast diplomacy as indicative of alienation and estrangement among people and the ways they are mediated.¹⁷ Because *On Diplomacy* still retained a largely rationalistic academic narrative as well as a wide-ranging theoretical scope, it was accepted by canonical IR to a certain extent. I say "certain extent" because in the following few years a number of postmodernist IR scholars took the same philosophical and theoretical base that informed *On Diplomacy* to mount a more substantial attack on canonical IR.¹⁸ For already *On Diplomacy* possessed an element of postmodernist critique, casting doubt over the relationship between power and knowledge, culture and reality, as well as the status of grand narratives.

The criticism of canonical IR and its complicity with modernity was to materialize more acutely with a number of other publications that were to appear at around the same time. During the same year that Der Derian wrote *On Diplomacy* he co-edited a volume with Michael Shapiro that was more controversially cynical about

¹⁶Cf. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1994); James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1987).

¹⁷Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*.

¹⁸ It is interesting to note that when Der Derian published the "sequel" to *On Diplomacy* in 1992, he was met by more pronounced criticisms, even from those who acknowledged his earlier book as a welcome addition to international relations. By the time the latter book was written Der Derian was more concerned with the implications of postmodern culture and the ramifications of the Persian Gulf War than about historiographical questions of diplomatic practice. In the latter case Der Derian had incorporated the notions of intertextuality, hyperreality, and acceleration from Barthes, Virilio, and Baudrillard, among others. See James Der Derian, *Anti-Diplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War* (Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

IR in general. Perhaps its title, *International/Intertextual Relations*, and its eclectic collection of essays ranging from more theoretical and philosophical subjects to references on sport, pornography, and espionage novels emphasize the overall ambit of postmodernism in opening up new ways of reading IR and in forcing one to face the more profound effects of language, textuality, archaeology, genealogy, and subjectivity that form the discipline's foundation.¹⁹ As Donna Gregory introduces in her foreword, postmodern IR attempts to "make strange" and to "denaturalize" the various issues confronting the discipline.²⁰ Furthermore beside a plethora of books that emerged in the early 1990s on postmodern IR, numerous related articles were also to appear in scholarly journals like *International Studies Quarterly*,²¹ *Millennium*,²² and *Alternatives*, all of which incorporate concepts like dissidence, marginality, otherness, discourse, discursivity, boundaries. Particularly with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the writing of postmodern IR rose to a new height, frenetically opposing mainstream IR's inability to predict and account for this event. But how do these projects sit in the broader disciplinary framework of IR and what purposes do they serve?

As mentioned, opponents of postmodern IR reacted to it because it attempted to critique the canonical centre without using the predetermined rules of the disciplinary language. Hence postmodern IR was at once obscurantist, verbose, and contained no familiar theoretical landmarks like realism, liberalism, sovereignty, war,

¹⁹ James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, eds, *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (New York: Lexington Books, 1987).

²⁰ Donna U. Gregory, foreword, *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, eds. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Lexington Books, 1987) xiv–xv.

²¹ See the special issue, R.B.J. Walker and Richard Ashley, eds., "Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 34.3 (1990).

diplomacy, or peace. Rather it attempted to position IR together as an entity that was discursively produced by modernity. What does this mean? The foundations on which IR is built are problematic and there are insufficient mechanisms in questioning the bases of these foundations. For instance, two major analytical methods of IR, realism and liberalism, are disjunctive interpretations of the relationship between man, nature, and society. Applied to IR they extend such relationships to the behaviour of sovereign states in international "society." Even if these tropes presume to have universal applicability they are not immediately self aware of their cultural origins. Postmodern IR's questioning of these foundations attempts to foreground this cultural perspectivism of IR and to emphasize the constructed-ness of so many other "givens" of the discipline. In a sense postmodernist IR, although wide-ranging in scope, emanates from this. Both the realist and liberal IR paradigms, as Jim George notes, are unified through their "empiricist-positivist metaphysic."²³ In other words they both agree on viewing the world as comprising of "real" objects that exist outside of one's consciousness, that sovereign states are some of these objects, and that (especially since the late 1960s) the only way to ascertain the truth about these objects was to subject them to dispassionate scientific inquiry.

The postmodern IR project has, therefore, during the late 1980s and early 1990s come to be represented by a number of projects. The most resonant of which concerned the discipline in general and revolved around the binary division between theory and practice. Thus in the conventional sense international relations had been divided between humanistic, philosophical, and qualitative side and a more hardcore

²²See various special issues in *Millennium* on "Culture and International Relations" 22.3 (1993), "Philosophical Traditions in International Relations" 17.2 (1988), as well as 17.1 (1988).

²³Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994).

component comprising of event-driven analysis. This specifically refers to the theoretical writers studying the overarching nature of global politics, interstate relations, and to provide the means to predict and explain their actions while the latter falls into purview of subjects like country studies, defence and strategic studies, foreign policy analysis and so on. While both sides are undoubtedly interrelated, there is nonetheless a chasm that separates their respective scholars. Thus it is possible for a newspaper columnist, for instance, to write about United States' relations with China without necessarily having been schooled in IR theory. Postmodern IR's reintegration of theory and practice attempts to blur the cause and effect relationship between theory and practice and to elevate the discrete and specific knowledges of world politics to a larger cultural production, discourse, class interest, or worldview. This theory/practice aspect of postmodern IR strategically raises the prospect of the "Third Debate."²⁴ Again although "debates" in IR have often been relegated to the domain of "theory," the postmodern "Third Debate" now implicates the discipline in its entirety. If the first involved the debate between realism and liberalism as the preferred way of looking at world politics (during the Interregnum) and the second took place between hermeneutical realism and positivist realism, the third attempted to inaugurate a post-positivist era. By this the theory/practice divide was not so much made irrelevant as it created an awareness that both theory and practice emanated from a larger social need to construct certain truths about the world. Examples of this include the questioning of sovereignty and the interpolation of political theory,²⁵ the linguistic and textual nature of the discipline,²⁶ the

²⁴Yosef Lapid, "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," *International Studies Quarterly* 33.3 (1989): 235-254; Thomas J. Biersteker, "Critical Reflections on Post-Positivism in International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 33.3 (1989): 263-267.

²⁵R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

construction of gender and the inclusion of feminism,²⁷ the problem of universalism in IR and the contingency of identity and difference,²⁸ and the primacy of space.²⁹ Once this fundamental critique of positivist international relations was in place, it increasingly characterized canonical IR as a centrifugal entity, weaving in the various subfields into a complex of cultural signification, representation, and production. Subsequently this opened up possibilities for examining IR from other points of view, for example, United States foreign policy as construction of American identity rather than a method of safeguarding national interests,³⁰ the heterogeneity of the security discourse,³¹ its video representation and simulation,³² and the social construction of nuclearism.³³

²⁶See works by Michael J. Shapiro as *Language and Political Understanding: The Politics of Discursive Practices* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); *Language and Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984); *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); *Reading the Postmodern Polity: Political Theory as Textual Practice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

²⁷Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); V. Spike Peterson, ed., *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992); J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives in Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); and Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1996). In more recent years the feminist project has moved from one asking questions about women's absence from the discipline to problematizing the notion of masculinity. See for instance Marysia Zalewski and Jane Parpart, eds., *The "Man Question" in International Relations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

²⁸William E. Connolly, "Identity and Difference in Global Politics." *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of Global Politics*, eds. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Lexington Books, 1989) 323–341; *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Jim George and David Campbell, "Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference: Critical Social Theory and International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 34.3 (1990): 269–293.

²⁹John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

³⁰David Campbell, "Global Inscription: How Foreign Policy Constitutes the United States," *Alternatives* 15.3 (1990): 263–286; and *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

³¹Simon Dalby, "Security, Modernity, Ecology: The Dilemmas of Post-Cold War Security Discourse," *Alternatives* 17.1 (1992): 95–134.

This tension between a canonical discipline that insists on certain restrictions in observing the world and a radical postmodern critique that predicated on antifoundationalism opens up numerous possibilities. For the concept of imperialism it produces an increased consciousness of what it means, how it is manifested, and how it envelops different subjectivities into a grand scheme of knowledge. Under a positivist or canonical framework IR has a very limited capacity in comprehending the full extent of imperialism's reach. Since it recognizes sovereign states as rational agents from which power is dispensed and that power is traditionally overt and physical (military, institutional, economic, etc.), canonical IR sees imperialism as a very logical consequence of state power exceeding national interests, as was seen, for instance, in the works of George Liska. As such one arrives at very specific and conditional definitions of imperialism, like the need for a hegemon to alter the status quo and balance of power before it can be recognized as being an imperialist.³⁴ Under such a consideration traditional IR blindly absolves other forms of power and, by so doing, ignores the disjunctive bases of power that seep through cultural and intellectual propagations. In other words IR fails to realize that long after an imperial power's physical and material domination has ended, these forms of domination will continue to interoperate with newer modes of control, for example in literature, culture, and academic work.

As illustrated at the beginning of this section postmodernism in IR begins at the level of consciousness rather than foundationalist representation. Power is therefore disciplinary in that prior to any knowledge about world politics, IR is complicit with

³²Michael J. Shapiro, "Strategic Discourse/Discursive Strategy: The Representation of 'Security Policy' in the Video Age," *International Studies Quarterly* 34.3 (1990): 327-340.

³³William Chaloupka, *Knowing Nukes: The Politics and Culture of the Atom* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

³⁴See the discussion in chapter 4 on Hans Morgenthau.

certain dominant, cultural, and intellectual predispositions. Subsequently imperialism is through such a view interlinked with the interests that underlie IR, such as US propensity for global hegemony, modernity, and masculinity. By accepting traditional IR wholesale as a way of locating themselves in global politics, non-western countries demonstrate what postmodern IR seeks to uncover: the colonial discourse that continues to regulate exclusive western patterns of thought. Such contributions towards the exposure of the collusion between imperial power and world knowledge also gives rise to another productive facet of postmodern IR. If canonical IR promotes a very selective interpretation of world politics, it does so by excluding the voices, ideas, and worldviews of what may be called the subaltern. Women, people of colour, the insane, terrorists, rogue regimes; all these are groups that mainstream IR believes are identity positions that carry too much emotional baggage and are therefore unable to provide a rational approach to the discipline. Mainstream IR does not necessarily exclude these people from being participants in its discourse but to be taken seriously they must background all these effects of identity and uphold the principles and rules accepted by the discipline. In this regard postmodern IR excoriates this practice because it effectively subsumes diversity and difference under a particular culture that, through modernity, masquerades as universality.³⁵ Therefore what postmodern IR does is to revert IR's totality and to uphold difference as the very vehicle through which the understanding of global politics is to take place. All of this through methods like deconstruction (the inversion of binary pairs where the lesser antinomy is revalued), exposing the social construction of meaning, and the constitution of privilege in the discipline. Hence for

³⁵Tony Porter, "Postmodern Political Realism and International Relations Theory's Third Debate," *Beyond Positivism: Critical Reflections in International Relations*, eds. Claire Turenne Sjolander and Wayne S. Cox (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994) 108.

the notion of imperialism postmodern IR attempts to allow identities that have been suppressed to be given a more central and recognizable role than before.

Although postmodernism appears to provide a new way of thinking about the relationship between international relations and imperialism, there are a number of shortcomings that do not go far enough in its purported recovery of the other. In effect this disjunctively locates postmodernism as both inside and outside of imperialism because it dabbles with a contingency of otherness whose essentialism is permanently deferred. Postmodernist readings of international relations impose three restrictions on their representations of otherness. First, while the politics of postmodernism conceives itself as a struggle against dominant, disciplinary regimes of knowledge/power, it fashions its resistance not as *the* factual or *the* alternate counterpoint to prevailing norms, values, and culture.³⁶ In other words, even though it attempts to introduce differing “cultural elements” into the debate, to create space for “new ways of thinking,” and to allow previously marginalized views into the discipline, postmodernism refuses to locate itself as a dialectical contest that merely seeks to replace one viewpoint with another.³⁷ As a result, IR theorists like Richard Ashley, Jim George, James Der Derian, Michael J. Shapiro and William Connolly have preferred to leave the identity of the other ambiguous in their writings. This move appears to be advantageous in the sense that it allows alterity to be infinitely contestable and by so doing create the space for other critical social movements like feminism and postcolonialism to enter. For example, in William Connolly’s essay on “Identity and Difference in Global Politics,” the discussion of tensions between the colonizer and native during the “discovery of America” allows the writer to

³⁶See for example, Connolly, “Identity and Difference in Global Politics” 331–332; Richard K. Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics,” *Alternatives* 12. 4 (1987): 408.

³⁷Richard K. Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematic,” *Millennium* 17.2 (1988): 254.

intertextually locate the plight of the “academic other.”³⁸ However, Connolly subsequently references Tzvetan Todorov’s methodological refusal of speaking from either the side of the Christian hegemonic self (“universalism”) or the “conquered” other (“internal contextualism”). Explains Connolly,

...the common quest for purity erases (while leaving marks and smudges behind) the very enigma of otherness it began to render legible. Universalism subjugates the particularity of the other to its own particular code with universalist pretensions; and internal contextualism subjugates the particularity of the other to the myth of universal transparency through intellectual sympathy emanating from a superior culture.³⁹

While this ambiguity of otherness is potentially useful as a space-clearing gesture, its position within dichotomistic relationships in postmodern politics is more suspicious. In Connolly’s later writing, otherness becomes subordinate to the pair, identity/difference, because it is the ethicality by which the dominant identity inscribes itself into being that Connolly wishes to investigate. otherness is, in this context, seen only as an effect of difference that identity requires for self-legitimation.⁴⁰ On closer inspection, the postmodernist literature of Third Debate IR questionably follows a similar schema in its recovery of the other. While pontificating on the importance of “celebrating” difference, the role of the “marginal,” of lending voice to silenced elements, and of reopening closures, postmodernist IR scholars rely heavily on dichotomies. In effect, it is presumed that under the Cartesian (equated with modernity) regime, logocentricity is instrumental in sustaining a difference-effacing order.⁴¹ This presumption thus compels Ashley to warn:

³⁸Connolly, “Identity and Difference in Global Politics” 325.

³⁹Connolly, “Identity and Difference in Global Politics” 327.

⁴⁰Connolly, *Identity\Difference*.

⁴¹George, *Discourses of Global Politics* 30–31, 70–74. See also Richard K. Ashley, “Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War,” *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, eds. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Lexington Books, 1989) 261–264.

The logocentric procedure is not difficult to understand. Its workings are most plainly seen in relation to familiar practical oppositions such as literal/figural, structure/superstructure, core/periphery, continuity/change, nature/culture, serious/nonserious, individual/collective, real/ideological, depth/surface, male/female, and domestic/international. Encountering these and other oppositions, the logo-centric disposition inclines a participant in the regime of modernity to impose hierarchy. It inclines a participant to identify his voice of interpretation and practice with a subjective standpoint, a sovereign interpretive center, from which one side in such oppositions can be conceived as a higher reality, belonging to the domain of logos, or pure and indecomposable presence in need of no explanation.⁴²

Given such an understanding, postmodernist theorists subsequently adopt Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism as an attempt to show how the hierarchical relationship in each dichotomistic pair could be inverted, and by so doing, render senseless the tendencies of antihistoricism, continuity, and ethical appropriateness in logocentricity. A tension now pervades this discussion of alterity. While previously assuming that there is ambiguity with regards to the identity of the other, the inclination to think in dichotomistic terms actually conflates alterity in a process that is not only western in its inception but also discrete, fragmented, and singular in composition.

If logocentric processes preoccupy postmodern IR scholars by providing an object of critique, then the other cannot stand isolated from its antinomous correlate—the self. This self/other relationship forms the second set of restrictions on the representations of alterity by the postmodernist IR literature; that for all its interest in recovering the other, postmodernist theory eventually reasserts the position of the self. One good example is the work of David Campbell. In *Writing Security*, Campbell seeks to displace the common understanding of US foreign policy as predicated on the conduct of state to state relations in an anarcho–realist world order.⁴³ Instead, he situates US foreign policy as an identity constituting practice that

⁴²Ashley, "Living on Border Lines" 261.

⁴³Campbell, *Writing Security*.

reifies a (/an American) territorial, ideological self while constructing the other outside of recognizable identity-protecting markers such as state boundaries or American societal values. While *Writing Security* provides a means to introduce identity into the discussion of foreign policy and to suggest how an “American” self is constructed in relation to a “foreign” other, the ultimate object of the study remains largely the United States. By avoiding examination of how the other has come to accept (or resist) its alterity as such, Campbell’s book continues to privilege the American self even though it appears at first to be a critique of it. This subordination of the other to the self continues to figure prominently in many of Campbell’s writings, but it is perhaps in “the Deterritorialization of Responsibility” that this problem is clearly demonstrated.⁴⁴ In this essay, Campbell is skeptical about the limitations of moral considerations in international relations and proceeds to find alternate ways with which the postmodernist project could be ethically productive. Campbell finds the solution in the works of the Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, which allow responsibility to be deployed not as an action contingent to the individual but as necessary in the very composition of one’s subjectivity. In a word, alterity is implicated in this understanding because Levinas conceives of subjectivity as a product of its affinity with the other. Since the self’s right of existence inevitably depends on the coterminous existence of the other, the self’s unconditional responsibility to the other is invariably called into play. Campbell displays so much commitment to Levinas’ “radical refiguring of subjectivity” that he decides to “supplement” a number of the philosopher’s shortcomings—the question of ethics in an environment marked by multiplicity,⁴⁵ Levinas’ unabashed support for the concept

⁴⁴David Campbell, “The Deterritorialization of Responsibility: Levinas, Derrida, and Ethics at the End of Philosophy,” *Alternatives* 19.4 (1994): 455–484.

⁴⁵Campbell, “The Deterritorialization of Responsibility” 463–465.

of the (perhaps Israeli) state,⁴⁶ and his absolution of Israeli role in a massacre of Palestinians by Lebanese Christian troops in 1982⁴⁷—with Derridean deconstructionism.⁴⁸ Campbell does not display any intention to critique the self/other presupposition that Levinasian thought depends on, as his project seeks to extend or augment Levinas' philosophy. In effect, the rationality that Campbell uses through Levinas sustains the self as lying at the centre of inquiry. Subsequent engagements such as by Daniel Warner fail to decentre the centrality of the self as the question of the extent of responsibility appears to remain the subject of dispute.⁴⁹

Campbell is aware of the “departure” Levinasian ethics presents as he identifies it as a form of “antihumanism” opposed to the Liberal, autonomous freedom⁵⁰ that characterizes so much of western philosophy. This point interestingly ushers in the question of whether or not Campbell's work actually represents an irruption in modern epistemologies or if it extends western thought. This forms the third restriction on the representation of otherness by the literature of IR, and it is at this juncture that I assume all postmodern writings do sustain the project of modernity and its cultural origins. In a certain way, this has already been preempted in my discussion of the first two restrictions of otherness in postmodernism. I had intended to show that the otherness in postmodern IR moves from its proclaimed political ambiguity to its cultural specificity by way of its reliance on the interplay between dichotomies (eg. identity/difference, dominant discourse/alternative) and the inescapable embrace of the self as subject. In other words, postmodern IR's “way of

⁴⁶Campbell, “The Deterritorialization of Responsibility” 465–466.

⁴⁷Campbell, “The Deterritorialization of Responsibility” 466–467.

⁴⁸Campbell, “The Deterritorialization of Responsibility” 468–477.

⁴⁹Daniel Warner, “Levinas, Buber and the Concept of Otherness in International Relations: A Reply to David Campbell,” *Millennium* 25.1 (1996): 111–128.

⁵⁰Campbell, “The Deterritorialization of Responsibility” 462.

knowing” otherness is not culturally neutral but has to be situated within a western philosophical context that gives it meaning and comprehensibility. This way of knowing, I stress, privileges the rationality that emanates from the idea of the autonomous and self-reflexive subject.⁵¹

However, this cultural standpoint is not something that is oblivious to postmodern theorists as they do demonstrate self-consciousness of this problem. They adopt such ways of knowing only “parasitically” because their politics of resistance can only be realized when it engages with the very level of the discourse that they are opposed to. Nonetheless, this parasitism produces tensions that leave the question of otherness largely unresolved. Who is this other? Is this other expressible only in western patriarchal discourses that understand it as “marginality” and “difference”? Can international relations, postmodern or otherwise, adequately recover the other without consolidating or reproducing the west as the site of academic and intellectual power? Is there a way of dealing with otherness without inciting or being parasitic to any cultural standpoint? These are difficult questions, and although the answers are a long way off, a direction towards them could be sought in addressing colonial subjectivity as otherness. By colonial subjectivity, I am insisting that self-understanding — how a human being or groups of people come to recognize certain things as true (and others as false) and to create their worldviews — takes place at many levels and often in violent ways. In this regard, the self-other relationship may be interchangeable since the statement, “I am always someone else’s other” bears some merit. In a larger group setting however, this statement loses valency as a number of cross-cutting group subjectivities make it difficult to reduce subjectivity to any particular individual. In other words, the earlier statement necessitates a

⁵¹Prem Rajaram, “Self/Other and Responsibility in International Relations,” thesis, Australian National University, 1995.

corollary, “*We* are always someone else’s other.” This presumes some parity among all groups, which I can safely assume to be functionally impossible. This then calls for the conception that some subjectivities prevail over others in such a way as to render certain self-understandings inappropriate or invalid. This works to inculcate or to impose one’s subjectivity onto others’, leaving the othered party convinced of its own alterity. Borrowing from the Orwellian dictum about equality, it is then possible for a third corollary to be made about subjectivity, that “some Selves are more selves than others.”

Richard Rorty and the Pragmatism of Postmodern Imperialism

Marx hoped for, and Heidegger dreaded, what Mehta calls... ‘the consuming Europeanization of the Earth.’ I myself have no better scenario to write to spell out my hopes for the future than such Europeanization.

Richard Rorty⁵²

...pain is nonlinguistic: It is what we human beings have that ties us to the non language-using beasts. So victims of cruelty, people who are suffering, do not have much in the way of language. That is why there is [*sic*] no such things as the “voice of the oppressed” or the “language of victims.” The language of victims once used is not working anymore, and they are suffering too much to put new words together. So the job of putting their situation into language is going to have to be done for them by somebody else. The liberal novelist, poet, or journalist is good at that. The liberal theorist usually is not.

Richard Rorty⁵³

In forging critical awareness of the restrictive, exclusive, and totalizing narratives of mainstream international relations, postmodernism thereby wishes to accentuate a position that has hitherto been suppressed and maligned. In a word the concepts of

⁵²Richard Rorty, letter to Anindita Niyogi Balslev, Aug. 1, 1990, *Cultural Otherness: Correspondence with Richard Rorty* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1991) 23.

⁵³Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* 94.

difference and otherness become extremely crucial in reconstructing global politics. Yet whether or not postmodern IR succeeds in doing so is another story, since it disjunctively straddles between a desire for difference and otherness that simultaneously rejects and promotes western and masculine solipsism. The latter materializes as postmodern IR's cultural self-referentiality and introspection as well as the inability to provide the essential grounds for a counter-modern identity. This raises a number of questions: how does one come to terms with postmodern IR with regard to the overall intellectual development of the discipline? If IR appears to have increasingly distanced itself from imperialism and yet is capable of recreating different forms of more subversive western cultural domination, how does postmodernism figure in that process of distancing? In this respect how is one to read postmodern IR?

In the midst of these questions one figure to emerge has written little about IR nor are his works often cited by postmodern IR scholars. Yet the Anglo-American postmodern philosopher,⁵⁴ Richard Rorty, writes with the type of ambivalence one finds in the literature of postmodern IR. For instance Rorty's postmodern philosophy possesses the anti-foundationalist, grand narrative-disavowing, and anti-positivist positions seen in many of his Continental counterparts. In a preliminary way this produces the mechanism to decentre the cultures, ideas, and discourses that oppress. However there is also a different "functionalist" side to Rorty that sits uncomfortably with his postmodern face. Since Rorty is also a pragmatist, all his philosophical speculations that are informed by postmodernism must also have public utility, contributing towards such forms of essentialism as moral progress, democracy, community, national pride, and citizenship. How Rorty the postmodernist reconciles

⁵⁴On the disinctiveness of the appellation, "Anglo-American postmodernism," see Nancey C. Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion, and Ethics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

with Rorty the pragmatist is very interesting indeed, for the difficulty in locating Rorty oftentimes attempts to override the charges of Eurocentrism and cultural imperialism that have been leveled at him.⁵⁵ As demonstrated in the two quotations above, Rorty's concern with otherness must be interpreted as a public and material problem and therefore returns them to the language of salvation one encounters frequently in colonial discourse. In this section I argue that while Rorty's twinning of postmodernism and pragmatism may have produced criticisms about his commitment to a viable politics of difference, Rorty's beliefs more appropriately represent the disjuncture in western culture that postmodernism cannot evade.

In this regard Rorty as a postmodernist advocates positions that familiarly counter the numerous aspects associated with modernity, modernism, and the Enlightenment. In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, for example, Rorty presents a criticism of realist, Platonist philosophy.⁵⁶ What Rorty finds problematic is that this category relies on a pre-existing, static, and essential nature that poses "perennial, eternal problems" to philosophical inquiries.⁵⁷ The tendency of philosophy, Rorty believes, is to conceive of knowledge as a grouping of representations and that knowledge poses a problem for which a theory must be created. As in the title of one of his chapters, Rorty prefers to view philosophy as a set of "privileged representations," borrowing from the views of Quine, Sellars, Davidson, among many others, the need to critique "givens" and the correspondence theory of truth become crucial. As Rorty urges, "we need to turn outward rather than inward, toward the social context of justification rather than to the relations between inner

⁵⁵Anindita Niyogi Balslev, letter to Richard Rorty, 14 Oct. 1990, *Cultural Otherness: Correspondence with Richard Rorty* 73–74. See also Clifford Geertz, "The Uses of Diversity," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 25.1 (1986): 105–123..

⁵⁶Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

⁵⁷Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* 3–7.

representations.”⁵⁸ While the rejection of reality and the critique of truth preoccupy much of Rorty’s thought, there are additional concerns about language and agency that colour his version of postmodernism. Since Rorty finds problems with these notions of reality and truth, the object that logically bears the onus of this epistemological condition ends up being language. For Rorty language is always contingent in which its users have the freedom to not make choices regarding explicit, commensurable truths. Instead such questions are deferred in favour of a “provisional, pragmatic, pyrrhonic, until-further notice certainty.”⁵⁹ This contingency of language is important for Rorty because, unlike such Continental postmodern assertions as the “death of the subject” or “death of the author,” Rorty’s postmodernism recognizes the “self-creational” potential of individual agents. As such contingency and language lend themselves to vocabularies that play an active social and political role. What does this mean? Within a conventional and realist way of looking at things, vocabulary is final: it is a matter-of-fact tool that is capable of mimetically describing real world things. But for Rorty vocabularies are arbitrary and people do have the ability to become aware of this and formulate a different vocabulary for their purposes. This act of “redescription” therefore produces Rorty’s conception of the postmodern agent—the ironist—an individual who is uncomfortable with and doubtful of the use of a final vocabulary, who cannot

⁵⁸Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* 210.

⁵⁹Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) 237. On that same page Bauman further observes:

Awareness of contingency does not ‘empower’: its acquisition does not give the owner advantage over the protagonists in the struggle of wills and purposes, or in the game of cunning and luck. It does not lead to, or sustains [*sic*], domination. As if to make the score even, it does not aid the struggle against domination either. It is, to put it bluntly, indifferent to the current or prospective structures of domination.

“underwrite or envision” these doubts within his or her present vocabulary, and who upholds the act of redescription as not creating a more “realistic” vocabulary.⁶⁰

Rorty’s ironist is, however, a profoundly ambivalent character. On the one hand ironism demonstrates the postmodern propensity to oppose and reject the many totalizing aspects of social life. Indeed the ironist by inference has the ability to provide a space in which the awareness of difference and otherness could emerge:

...playfulness is the product of their shared ability to appreciate the power of redescription, the power of language to make new and different things possible and important—an appreciation which becomes possible only when one’s aims becomes an expanding repertoire of alternative descriptions rather than the One Right Description. Such a shift is possible only to the extent that both the world and the self have been de-divinized. To say that both are de-divinized is to say that one no longer thinks of either as speaking to us, as having a language of its own, as a rival poet. Neither are quasi persons, neither wants to be expressed or represented in a certain way.⁶¹

On the other hand Rorty’s conception of the ironist is not a free-floating category or position. Instead the ironist is embedded onto a distinctive agency and meets a very particular and essential moral purpose. As a pragmatist Rorty outwardly refuses to speculate on what that purpose might be, preferring to leave this to contingency. The basis of this is that once ironism clears the ground of totalizing and dominating vocabulary, “truth” and “goodness”, whatever they may be, will eventuate.⁶² In principle this sounds very well but Rorty also defends against taking his ironist intellectual one step further. In this instance Rorty insists that the ironist must also be liberal because failing to do so would destroy the chances in which social hope and solidarity could be fostered.⁶³ In a way that seems to contradict the contingency of irony, Rorty presents another face to the liberal ironist that is steeped in culturally-

⁶⁰Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* 73.

⁶¹Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* 39–40.

⁶²See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* 84.

⁶³Richard Rorty, “Method, Social Science, and Social Hope,” *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982) 191–210.

solipsistic necessity. In other words, not only does Rorty attempt to combine positions that are antithetical, such as postmodernism with “bourgeois liberalism,”⁶⁴ democracy, and capitalism, his liberal ironist veers towards urging for patriotism and ethnocentricity.⁶⁵

Let me explain this point further by relating to Rorty’s recent lectures, contained in *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*. Presented earlier as the William E. Massey Lectures in the History of American Civilization, Rorty’s work concentrates on different leftist groups in US history and the impact they continue to have on that country’s sense of solidarity and community.⁶⁶ These groups under their various incarnations as the “reformist left,” the “cultural left,” the “academic left,” and the “new left” have had very undecided effects on national social progress. Some of these groups, harbouring elements of postmodern skepticism (although Rorty does not mention this directly) have the capability of overcoming the “sadism” of American selfishness perpetuated through conservatism.⁶⁷ However, Rorty avers that this form of skepticism, “bad knowingness,” can be potentially damaging because it undercuts the possibility of national pride, patriotism, and citizenship⁶⁸ as well as being unable to resolve the socio-economic problems that emerged as American sadism was declining.⁶⁹ In this regard *Achieving Our Country* appears to be framed in a vocabulary that has a

⁶⁴Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 197–202.

⁶⁵See David Palumbo-Liu, “Awful Patriotism: Richard Rorty and the Politics of Knowing,” *Diacritics* 29.1 (1999): 37–56.

⁶⁶Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁶⁷Rorty, *Achieving Our Country* 82–83.

⁶⁸Rorty, *Achieving Our Country* 7.

⁶⁹Rorty, *Achieving Our Country* 83.

tremendous sense of self-referentiality, centering on the United States as the entity around which smaller vocabularies gravitate:

Repudiating the correspondence theory of truth was Dewey's way of restating, in philosophical terms, Whitman's claim that America does not need to place itself within a frame of reference. Great Romantic poems, such as "Song of Myself" or the United States of America, are supposed to break through previous frames of reference, not be intelligible within them. To say that the United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem is to say that America will create the taste by which it will be judged. It is to envisage our nation-state as both self-creating poet and self-created poem.⁷⁰

There are traces of Rorty the postmodernist here and although his philosophical intimations are not as pronounced as in his other works, what is obvious is the use of liberal ironism in proclaiming a different construction of national pride.

This creates a baffling complexity because Rorty embraces two seemingly irreconcilable positions: a critical, ironist attitude and what appears to be a culturally conservative stance lamenting the increasing diversity and fragmentation of American society. What is the priority Rorty holds as far as social and political participation is concerned and to what extent is ironist intellectualism subordinate to it? To a number of his critics Rorty is incredibly disingenuous about these two opposing faces. Although Rorty sees them as complementary, his critics find any compromise unworkable and the pragmatic philosopher must in the end privilege one over the other. For instance, Ziauddin Sardar observes that Rorty reduces all aspects of social life to contingency, yet overtly longs for cultural hopes that are anything but contingent. In doing so Rorty summarily promotes one metanarrative—that of bourgeois liberalism—since (other) metanarratives have already been rejected as vapid and meaningless.⁷¹ Moreover Haber charges Rorty for practicing "cavalier

⁷⁰Rorty, *Achieving Our Country* 29.

⁷¹Sardar, *Postmodernism and the Other* 172–173.

elitism”⁷² and being inconsistent with his fusing of liberalism and ironism. First Rorty says that ironism and liberalism are “natural partners,” then he proceeds to conceive both as contradictory and antithetical before claiming that they are neither natural partners nor antithetical.⁷³ As a result Haber notes that Rorty’s politics of difference is unfeasible because he universalizes both totality and difference. Thus through this indecisive intellectual sleight of hand Rorty commits an unacceptable violence to his sense of ironism. Haber categorizes these as cultural imperialism, listing a number of issues. For instance Rorty’s privileging of liberalism makes him blind to his ethnocentrism, his sense of solidarity and community undermines the ironist commitment to pluralism, his essentialism of difference is a western construction, his notion of humiliation is inadequate for human solidarity, and his ideas of progress and solidarity assimilates otherness.⁷⁴

There is merit to these criticisms as they show that the postmodernism Rorty advocates is far from the politics of difference it initially appears to uphold. While the attacks on Rorty have revolved around his inconsistency, his inability or unwillingness to sidestep his sense of ethnocentric agency, it is vitally important to reconsider the pragmatic philosopher’s works in terms of disjuncture. As it has been stressed in this thesis, the relationship between ongoing imperialism and contemporary disciplinary or philosophical speculation is ambivalent and incommensurable. Within such a context the power of imperialism is not so much the overt ability to produce literary and disciplinary knowledge that justifies and sustains a given relationship between the metropole and its colonial peripheries. Rather disjuncture instantiates the constant, transformative ability for imperialism

⁷²Honi Fern Haber, *Beyond Postmodern Politics: Lyotard, Rorty, Foucault* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994) 44.

⁷³Haber 49–50.

⁷⁴Haber 66–70.

and disciplinary knowledge to undergo widespread moral and interpretive changes without a fundamental alteration to a deep-seated, psychical desire for the other. In previous chapters this desire has manifested itself in different ways, namely the increasing sublimation of the colonial other with the self but the retention of a disjunctive mechanism that sustains the western self as above and over these categories. Transposed onto the link between international relations and imperialism, colonial desire creates a set of literature that appears to be morally conscious of these issues but nonetheless sustains an adjunct machinery that collectively celebrates the intellectual and cultural ascendancy of the west while simultaneously denigrating the non-west.

Rorty's works are closely aligned to these disjunctures because while he is aware of the moral considerations involved in ironism, the location and primacy of such essentialist travesties like liberalism, US national pride, and citizenship vacillate between contingency and necessity. As such these essentialisms are privileged and exalted even when Rorty claims that they serve secondary and pragmatic purposes. Because colonial desire is already in-built into Rorty's work it is virtually impossible for an entity like the liberal ironist to be exterior to any ethnocentric or cultural solipsistic view. To further explain this I will locate this disjuncture in Rorty's "pragmatism" and the subsequent bifurcation of the private and public realms. First of all, even though Rorty is proclaimed a postmodernist, he is also a pragmatist. While Rorty's postmodernist side may be informed by such continental philosophers as Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault, Rorty's pragmatist side derives from a largely American philosophy. Drawing from the ideas of Charles Pierce, William James, and John Dewey, Rorty's pragmatism is a moral philosophy based on the importance of action. As Rorty writes, "we pragmatists hope to dissolve traditional philosophical problems by vieweing [*sic*] them as disguised forms of

practical problems. Our slogan is that if it doesn't make a difference to what we do, it makes no difference at all."⁷⁵ But because pragmatism strives to be contingent, it refuses to outwardly specify what these problems may be or to prescribe what actions may be taken to resolve them. Since pragmatism is a mediatory philosophy rather than a "final" philosophy about the basic nature of man, its purpose is to provide the best intellectual means possible in which individuals could realize or "self-create" themselves and, by so doing, contribute to overall social progress—whatever that might be. Hence pragmatism consists in non-essentialist, anti-epistemological, and inquiry-liberal doctrines that refuse to speculate on the inherent truthfulness and goodness of things, trusting that individuals will best decide for themselves.⁷⁶

In pursuing these goals pragmatism results in a troubling bifurcation. Since pragmatism is utilitarian its concern is to provide a set of tools for moral progress, and the realm on which it acts is subsequently between the private and public. This is the zone in which Rorty attempts to account for his inconsistencies and contradictions with regard to mutual support for and dislike of the postmodern ironist individual and also to the combination of ironism with liberalism. But as I have noted in Haber's criticism that Rorty is not even consistent on the relationship between private and public, ironism and liberalism, it is very difficult to ascertain the direction he wishes to take on this matter. As a generalization Rorty's understanding of the private and public realm is that they are separate, incommensurable, but also interconnected. Pragmatism provides the tools for both an ironist self-creation and for social progress and community formation. Whether or not one leads or contributes to the other is unclear but Rorty's valorization of the ironist stops the

⁷⁵Rorty, letter to Balslev, 1 Aug. 1990 17.

⁷⁶Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism," *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982) 162–166.

moment she⁷⁷ attempts to transpose that ironism onto the public realm. This is because for Rorty the “public” continues to be a booming assemblage of activity: the explicit creation of morals, communities, political decisions, and scientific progress. While this public realm seems to rely on essentialism and metaphysics, Rorty finds this perfectly acceptable as long as they do not trespass on the liberalism on which the private and public can ceaselessly and freely play themselves out. In certain instances Rorty sees the private practices of redescription and self-creation beneficial in countering the stifling metaphysical and Platonist truths circulating around his society, but yet consider them virtually useless because they see liberal society as being too caught up in its insularity to offer any possibility of reform.⁷⁸ In this regard Rorty regards them as antisocial because at their deepest level of self-creation, they have no sense of human solidarity.⁷⁹ Yet in other cases Rorty hopes to combine the action and utilitarian approach of public life with that of the private.

Wherever the pragmatic philosopher attempts to go with his contradictory distinctions of the public and the private is not the purpose here. What matters most is that it produces a confusing doubling in Rorty that, proverbially speaking, “covers his own tracks” and makes it ambiguously difficult to label his thought as ethnocentric. Since the private/public split forms the conjunction of postmodernism and pragmatism, ironism and liberalism, it legitimizes a private Rorty reflecting on the public as well as a public Rorty putting into literal effect what his private ironism instructs. Since Rorty is never consistent about how the private and public realms interrelate, such recursive-ness forces one to resign to these realms as both incommensurable and essential substances. Therefore Rorty’s private, self-creational

⁷⁷On referring to the ironist Rorty frequently uses the feminine pronoun.

⁷⁸Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* 83.

⁷⁹See for instance Rorty’s critique of Foucault in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* 61–69. Also see *Achieving our Country*.

assessment of philosophical matters lead him to pontificate on open and contingent theories of ironism. This is the Rorty one encounters when reading about his discussions on metaphysical and ironist philosophers, and the conditions that facilitate such reflections. Embedded within that private reflection is also a generic public order that pragmatists of every badge and tribe should follow. As all individuals are immediately members of different communities and societies, the greatest responsibility they must uphold is to contribute to the practical and moral improvement of their society and to provide for social hope, whatever this may be. Rorty takes these aspects of private ironism seriously and they subsequently translate to a public domain of action that reflects his existing cultural and political situation. As an American academic, therefore, Rorty perceives a public necessity in the progress of American society, drawing to the surface his interpretation of the problems confronting the US. In view of this a book such as *Achieving Our Country* is different from say, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* or *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Here one finds the most impassioned plea for an explicit and workable solidarity in American society based on “awe”, social hope, and national pride. For example his chapter on the “Inspirational Value of Great Works of Literature” in the same book predicated on a set of canonical and essentialist literary text and invites criticisms of his profound “romanticism.”⁸⁰

In spite of this intransitivity what is more appropriate is that these textual differences are not so much gradual transformations in Rorty’s thought but a result of the private and public realm slipping and sliding past each other. In this case while the public face of Rorty appears to be inducing such thoughts, there is a nagging suspicion that it inserts a resonance on the private. Since the private, the private’s interpretation of the public, and the public are interrelated it becomes impossible to

⁸⁰Palembo-Liu 51–54.

divest each term from its associated influences. A Rorty publicly committed to celebrating American greatness is already caught up in that position of power that governs these relationships in the first place. As a result, when one speculates about the private and public realms there is an impossibility to dissociate the image of America from that articulation. All values that are deemed prior to philosophy, whether or not they aid in private self-creation or generating public hope become at once both culturally particular and contingent. Something like liberalism that forms the basis of Rorty's pragmatic postmodernism ends up being location-less. Because Rorty recognizes liberalism as culturally particular, he does not overtly endorse it as the ultimate philosophical endpoint. But since pragmatism is more interested in providing the tools rather than the end objective, liberalism becomes the founding moment—the most useful and noblest instrument—in which individuals and society can best realize themselves. As liberalism becomes necessary for both the private and public domains, conditioning the possibility of success for both, it becomes one of those dreaded, free-floating concepts that impose its own cultural weight by eradicating its own essentialism.

The inherent complexity of Rorty's works is not so much the fact that his ideas have changed over the years. Instead it is the convoluted, recursive doctrine of pragmatic postmodernism he embraces that produces both critical consciousness as well as totalizing and celebratory cultural viewpoints. At a glance this might appear to be innocuous, but at a deeper level subversively exposes the type of machinery at work, during recent times, to perpetuate an American form of dominance. Compared to examples of disjuncture in other chapters, Rorty does not seem to be so different after all. The anti-imperialists of the 1900s, the globalists of recent times, the realist IR scholars, Joseph Conrad, and Samuel Huntington were all intellectuals who were critical about imperialism in one way or another but their cultural ties and

predispositions converted their imperial awareness into yet more entrenched forms of western hegemony. Likewise Rorty's work follows in the same pattern; while it promotes an even more profound way of penetrating the biases than before, it nonetheless has an inherent refusal to relinquish the ascendancy of the west, and in particular the United States. How is such a situation reflected in postmodern international relations? It is to this subject I now turn.

Between Disciplinary Politics and Otherness: Postmodern International Relations Reconsidered

In an earlier section I noted that postmodernism in international relations emerged as a result of rather mixed circumstances. These included, for example, the collective rejection of positivism and cultural shift in the academy, the reasserted ethical concern about identity in disciplinary practices, and historico-political events like the end of the cold war. To situate the relationship between postmodern IR and imperialism, therefore, becomes an exceedingly complex task because of the ambiguity of postmodernism's critical consciousness, its stated commitment to difference, and the difficulty it encounters in eliminating the resonance of western dominance. This tension between cultural criticism and western insularity is reflected keenly in the works of Richard Rorty, especially in his division between the private and public realms and how his refusal to address the issue of otherness and his public advocacy of American national pride push his work in the direction of ethnocentricity. While postmodern IR scholars hardly refer to Rorty in their works there is an inordinate amount of correspondence between them. Indeed should Rorty be invited to comment on these scholars he would probably respond by saying that they exemplify the importance of private ironism or self-creative attempts by individuals to redescribe their vocabulary of the political world. And although there

are *specific* areas where Rorty appears to diverge from them, that moment of divergence coincides with the *general* tension between cultural consciousness that is raised privately and the solipsism that is promoted publicly. For instance Rorty would probably object to postmodern IR's little public utility, disagreeing with it as something incapable of resolving the more material and practical problems facing the world: hunger, poverty, global inequities, and militarization. Instead he would side with the realists, for while he opposes their totalizing scope of truth and reality, they possess the immediate instruments for political action. This specific opposition, however, translates as an irreconcilable and disjunctive characteristic in Rorty's pragmatic postmodernism. This form of tension is not something that is missing from postmodern IR and especially in the disjuncture arising from its engagement with the mainstream.

In this section I will locate that Rortian tension in postmodern IR by examining the writings of two of its scholars, Richard Ashley and Jim George. Both have written extensively about international relations, but it is their writings on realist IR and the strategies employed in coming to terms with its plurality that are particularly notable. What is troubling in this respect is that postmodernism regards realist IR as representative of the totalizing mainstream narrative that has foreclosed the possibility of alternative explanations of global politics. But in many cases realist IR seems to be extremely eclectic and often consisting in characteristics different from postmodern IR's interpretation of realism. In its attempt to make realism "more realist," there is evidence that postmodern IR has made realism more monolithic and totalizing than it appears to be, resulting in an inability for postmodern and realist scholars to communicate or to engage with each other. I do not intend to defend such postmodern strategies of reading realism nor do I wish to promote realist pluralism as a truly generous discourse. I also do not claim that the writings of Ashley and George

in themselves mirror the private/public tension in Rorty. Instead, I am referring to the whole *process* whereby these writings become a subject for mainstream IR criticism; and under such terms of engagement/instantiate a cultural production indicative of Rortian disjuncture. A result of this is a display of introspective and self-referential problems of western intellectualism, which in the end, like Rorty, refuses to confront the more pressing questions of otherness.)

| How is realism rendered by postmodern scholars as a viable subject of critique? Some works produced after the early 1980s appear to suggest that the postmodernists have tended to seize realism in one particular manifestation or in a certain historical juncture. Hence for Richard Ashley in 1984, the subject was immediately the neorealism of Waltz, Krasner, Gilpin, and Keohane.⁸¹ For Jim George in 1993, it was also neorealism, but with emphasis on how in spite of changes to the world order, its positivist tendencies stubbornly continue to inform mainstream international relations scholars.⁸² And for Timothy Luke in 1992, the subject was realism facing postmodernity.⁸³ This is not to say that through such selectivity, postmodernist scholars have circumvented the issue of realism's multiplicitous and fragmented identity. Indeed, of the postmodern international relations scholars, Richard Ashley and Jim George do display interest in coming to terms with the many realisms. While Ashley appears to diminish the problem of realism, George puts the many contentions within realism into a genealogical perspective. As such, I argue, George's work is superior to Ashley's. Nonetheless, at a superficial level of

⁸¹Richard K. Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism," *International Organization* 38.2 (1984): 225-286.

⁸²Jim George, "Of Incarceration and Closure: Neorealism and the New/Old World Order," *Millennium* 22.2 (1993): 197-234.

⁸³Timothy Luke, "Discourses of Disintegration, Texts of Transformation: Re-Reading Realism in the New World Order," *Alternatives* 18.2 (1993): 229-258.

reading, the treatment of realism by both writers raise methodological questions about postmodern politics in international relations.

I begin by re-emphasizing that there is not and has never been *one* realism. As I stressed earlier, only a few abstract principles, such as the nature of anarchy, the predominance of the sovereign state, the role of national interest and the location of power provide realism with its boundaries and perceptions of concreteness. Apart from these, questions on normativity or descriptiveness, interpretivism or positivism, the limits of moral awareness, the extent of the sovereign state, the role of international institutions and the possibilities of peace proliferate. Instead of there being one single, timeless and coherent philosophy, method, category in realism, the many contentions within it resemble anything ranging from a self-rejuvenating conversation to a cacophonous debate. For instance, John Herz's writings up until the early 1980s suggests that he was disposed more towards the hermeneutical or critical branch of realism than that of positivism. First, instead of characterizing the sovereign state as a timeless, ahistorical essence, he embraced it as a fluid entity and has even speculated on its changeability and potential demise.⁸⁴ He even questioned the presence of state centrality as he felt that the state was internally disunified.⁸⁵ Second, he upheld the impossibility of realism based solely on power politics and insisted that there should be a link between the descriptive and normative aspects of

⁸⁴John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) 96–108; and "Rise and Demise of the Territorial State," *World Politics* 9.4 (1957): 473–493. In this instance, Herz was responding to the notion of "impermeability" and "impenetrability" of the territorial state, as demonstrated by the European balance of power politics. Herz's concern was that with the advent of atomic weapons, the territoriality of the sovereign state is now violable. This of course differs from the International Political Economy theories of Keohane and Nye where the demise of the sovereign state as an actor in international relations is due in large part to changing transnational flows (eg. trading regimes, non-governmental actors). Nonetheless, what is interesting here is Herz's departure from classical realism where the assumption that the sovereign state as an actor requires the presupposition of internal coherence and unity.

⁸⁵John H. Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories and Realities* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1951) 28.

international relations. This, he formulated as realist idealism in 1951.⁸⁶ Third, he displayed remarkable critical insight by not only suggesting that reality is subjectively constructed (hence eerily foreshadowing the postmodernist understanding of the social and linguistic construction of reality) but by also warning against taking the nation, power and the international system as real and given.⁸⁷

More realist “anomalies” can also be seen in the “grand texts” of realism. For example, in order to provide a “realist critique” of “utopianism,” E. H. Carr deployed such concepts as the “relativity of thought” and the “adjustment of thought to purpose” to shatter the presumed objectivity of post-first world war liberal thought.⁸⁸ In Hans Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations*, one witnesses the tensions between Morgenthau the subjectivist, and Morgenthau the empiricist. On the one hand, Morgenthau stressed the importance of the subjective constitution of meaning, as exemplified by this oft quoted segment:

[the assumption] that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power... allows us to retrace and anticipate, as it were, the steps a statesman—past, present, or future—has taken or will take on the political scene. We look over his shoulder when he writes his dispatches; we listen in on his conversation with other statesmen; we read and anticipate his very thoughts.⁸⁹

On the other hand, he upheld the possibility of objectively understanding international behaviour:

[p]olitical realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. In

⁸⁶Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism*.

⁸⁷John H. Herz, “Political Realism Revisited,” *International Studies Quarterly* 25.2 (1981): 184–185.

⁸⁸E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (London: Papermac, 1995 [1946]). On Carr’s concept of the “adjustment of thought to purpose,” he implied that theories are directed towards maintaining the enemy as morally inferior while creating the self as superior. This pre-empted David Campbell’s discussion of U.S. foreign policy’s construction of the self and other as taking place along similar lines. See David Campbell, *Writing Security*.

⁸⁹Morgenthau 5.

order to improve society it is first necessary to understand the laws by which society lives.⁹⁰

The examples of Herz, Carr and Morgenthau represent just some of the many varieties, tensions and contradictions within realism. In this case, that between a hermeneutical or historicist approach as opposed to a positivistic one. Many more can be pointed out as intersecting international relations theory at different levels of concern. First, there are the varieties of realism informed by different national identities—between American and British realism.⁹¹ Related to this is the second variety of realism related to the location and limits of political power. As discussed in chapter 4, American IR scholars believed that there were differences in the moral limitations in American realism compared to classical *raison d'état* and *realpolitik* as well as anarchic realism versus realist institutionalism. Third, realism is undecided about the constitution of agency and structure. Typically, this problem has come to be reflected in the dispute between the sub-field of International Political Economy that stresses on non-state transnational actors operating in a fluid international system, and neorealism that upholds the integrity and primacy of the sovereign state within a recognizable international state system. And fourth, realism appears to be syncretistic and ever-changing. In this regard, realism is historicizable considering its many debates and transformations since the late 1930s. For instance, the superseding of Wilsonian liberalism by classical realism, the eclipse of historicist/interpretivist method by positivist neorealism, the side-tracking of neorealism into International

⁹⁰Morgenthau 4.

⁹¹A key work that establishes the difference between American and British international relations Theory is Steve Smith, ed., *International Relations: British and American Perspectives* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

Political Economy, and more recently, the reconstruction of Waltzian neorealism into structural realism.⁹²

How then have the postmodernist scholars dealt with these epistemological variances within realism? Responding to Herz's "Political Realism Revisited" in 1981, Richard Ashley⁹³ was astonished by Herz's hermeneutical sensitivity. The problem posed by Herz's writings were summarily reduced to two explanations: Herz is not a "true realist" or Herz exemplifies that realism is a heterogeneous, open-ended "dialogue."⁹⁴ However, Ashley's reading of Jürgen Habermas allows him to claim the latter as a more feasible way of understanding Herz's version of realism. Following Habermas' categorization of human interests into the realms of the practical, technical, and emancipatory, Ashley devises three different kinds of realisms—practical realism, technical realism, and emancipatory realism. To the first two realisms, Ashley marks out the probable terrain within which the interpretivist or the positivist forms of realism could reside. It is however in the third—emancipatory realism—that Ashley locates Herz, stressing ardently that Herz was interested "in securing freedom from unacknowledged constraints, relations of domination, and conditions of distorted communication and understanding that deny humans the capacity to make their future through full will and consciousness."⁹⁵ In other words, it is not merely Herz's hermeneutic acumen that won him Ashley's accolade of emancipatory realism (had this been the case, Herz would have been relegated

⁹²See Barry Buzan, Charles Jones and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁹³Ashley's writings, as I shall discuss, were not distinctly "postmodern" at this point. Rather, he adapted most analytical tools from the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. Ashley's early writings are nonetheless important as they contribute to the larger picture of how he shifted from Critical Theory to postmodernism after the mid-1980s.

⁹⁴Richard K. Ashley, "Political Realism and Human Interests," *International Studies Quarterly* 25.2 (1981): 204–207.

⁹⁵Ashley, "Political Realism and Human Interests" 227.

merely to practical realism), but his commitment to a “universal consensus” and the critique of technical realism.⁹⁶

After “Political Realism and Human Interests,” Ashley abandons his reading of realism according to the Habermasian “interests.” He also stops exploiting tensions in Herz’s realism. Instead, from 1984 onwards, realism starts to disappear slowly from his writings. In “The Poverty of Neorealism,” there are no longer three realisms as the realist “dialogue” becomes reduced to two cardinal points: classical realism and neorealism. While Herz and Morgenthau were separated into different categories in “Political Realism,” they are now brought together in a singular rubric deemed antinomous to neorealism.⁹⁷ Subsequently in “the Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space,” even the distinction between classical realism and neorealism vanishes as the two categories now become coterminous in a single, realist “community.”⁹⁸ An important thing to note here is that Ashley’s objective was to point out that while the state of anarchy presumes that there is no community in international politics, there actually is one operationalized by realist international relations.⁹⁹ By “community,” Ashley does not refer to a celebrated stage of mutual oneness but the practices and knowledges that inform the constitution of international reality. Ashley uses the term, community, to refer to the many ideas advanced by such continental philosophers as Husserl, Heidegger, Kuhn, Bourdieu and Foucault.¹⁰⁰ For the purposes of “the Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space,” therefore, Ashley no longer

⁹⁶Ashley, “Political Realism and Human Interests” 229–230.

⁹⁷See Ashley, “The Poverty of Neorealism” 230.

⁹⁸Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space” 403–434.

⁹⁹Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space” 404, 406.

¹⁰⁰Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space” 403.

mentions the multiplicities of realism for there could be no realist “community” should realism be fragmented. As he mentions in an earlier essay:

my contentions are with respect to neorealism as a collective movement or project emerging in a shared context, having shared principles of practice, and observing certain background understandings and norms that participants mutually accept as unproblematic and that limit and orient the questions raised, the answers warranted, and the conduct of discourse among neorealists—this regardless of the fact that the participants may not be conscious of... the norms and understandings integrating them as one movement.¹⁰¹

Finally, in his “Living on Border Lines,” realism is no longer mentioned, as Ashley preoccupies himself with the historical figure of “man” in international relations.¹⁰² His sparring partner remains Kenneth Waltz, and the presupposition at this point is that since international relations has already been established by him to consist in a realist community, the conflation between realism and mainstream international relations is complete and in no need of a reminder.

In *Discourses of Global Politics*, Jim George provides some explanation for Ashley’s changing perceptions and treatment of realism. In the early 1980s, George surmises, Ashley was unaware of modernity’s tendencies in incorporating both hermeneutical principles as well as positivist imperatives, hence leaving Habermas as Ashley’s most reliable analytical implement. George goes on to assert that after facing responses to “The Poverty of Neorealism” by Friedrich Kratochwil¹⁰³ and, to a lesser extent, Robert Gilpin,¹⁰⁴ Ashley abandons Critical Theory for postmodernism.¹⁰⁵ This perhaps suggests why Ashley’s search for a realist

¹⁰¹Ashley, “The Poverty of Neorealism,” note 4.

¹⁰²Ashley, “Living on Border Lines.”

¹⁰³Friedrich Kratochwil, “Errors have their Advantage,” *International Organization* 38.2 (1984): 305–320.

¹⁰⁴Robert Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” *Neorealism and its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 301–321.

¹⁰⁵George, *Discourses of Global Politics* 172–176.

“community” and preoccupation of the location of “man” in international relations were at the forefront of his later writings.

George’s discussion of Ashley’s intellectual influences is not necessarily an incidental part of *Discourses of Global Politics*. I have chosen it to introduce the epistemological device that George himself adopts to account for the variances and tensions in realism. Through the first half of the book, George richly draws on the connections between international relations and post-Enlightenment philosophy, and establishes positivism as the dominant rationalizing force in modernity. As George argues, international relations’ *verstehen* tensions can be traced back to the synthesis between Humean and Kantian thought as well as the logical positivism after the 1920s.¹⁰⁶ In this regard, the subsistence of what appears to be rationalism and empiricism, and of interpretivist and positivist methods is not necessarily an aberration of modern thought but characteristic of it. On one level, George appears to believe that these *verstehen* tensions are not equally distinct in their own spheres, but exist in a Cartesian relationship where one dominates over the other; for example, positivism over interpretivism/historicism.¹⁰⁷ On another level, George relegates them to an arena where they both subsist equally within a metatheoretical mystique, hence providing a ground for his later critique of modern thought.¹⁰⁸

There are, therefore, many possibilities according to George’s reading of modern positivist thought in accounting for the contradictions and tensions in realism. The coexistence of a hermeneutical tradition with positivism in E. H. Carr’s *The Twenty Years Crisis* is no longer the mysterious or unique departure from the mainstream realist thought but representative of it. Moreover, George is convinced

¹⁰⁶George, *Discourses of Global Politics* 52–57.

¹⁰⁷George, *Discourses of Global Politics*, esp. ch. 2.

¹⁰⁸See for instance George, *Discourses of Global Politics* 175.

that in Carr's text, it is positivism that reigns supreme since the politics of that book necessitates distinctions between the descriptive and the normative.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the intermingling of hermeneutical and scientific thinking in Hans Morgenthau is deemed unimportant with regard to the overall scientific necessities encapsulated by cold war politics:

Morgenthau here is, unequivocally, at the heart of scientific (positivist) Realism, primarily because in (re)invoking Carr's scientific ambitions, [he] prompted an already-existing "national ideology" in the United States, set upon Enlightenment progressivist postulates. Committed at the policy level, to the crudest form of logocentricity (e.g., free world/closed ideology), the U.S. policy elite now turned increasingly willing to speak to the "Prince" in terms supportive of a Realist Cold War perspective and the American (scientific) way.¹¹⁰

Finally, as for the emergence of International Political Economy (IPE), George is cognizant of the discursive circumstances leading to its inception. Recognizing that Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye sought to challenge the hegemony of the sovereign state in neorealist thought and to provide for means to examine categories omitted by realism, George nonetheless insists that IPE and all its manifestations (eg. Grotian regime theory) are essentially an "adaptation" of the discourse of realism rather than a reaction against it.¹¹¹ This theme of continuity extends from George's reading of modern thought and its treatment of change within an object. Since traditional realism and regime theory draw from the same modernist-positivist base, alternatives to any mainstream thought are seen within a "politics of collaboration."¹¹² Quoting from Richard O'Meara, George finally ends the notion of difference between regime theory and traditional realism by reducing them to several (general) points of similarity: their dependence on power and self-interest as "analytical concepts" and

¹⁰⁹George, *Discourses of Global Politics* 77–80.

¹¹⁰George, *Discourses of Global Politics* 94.

¹¹¹George, *Discourses of Global Politics* 115.

¹¹²George, *Discourses of Global Politics* 115–116.

that “both are ultimately concerned with describing and explaining the behaviour of states.”¹¹³

As it can be seen in the writings of Richard Ashley and Jim George, the reaction towards change in realism and its manifest tensions and contradictions have been framed by a theoretical lens provided by “deconstructionist” or “genealogical” methods loosely associated with postmodernism. Between Ashley and George, therefore, the question of variance in realism has been siphoned through means, which at a very simple reading, appear to be reductionist. In the case of Ashley, his search for a realist “community” leads to his ceasure in further exploiting the tensions in realism. For Ashley, a politics exists, which is the necessity of insisting realism as a dominant discourse, as a “ritual of power.” Even though George addresses the tensions in realism that Ashley omits, his writings seem reductionist too as he enshrouds the development of realist thought with modernity as an explanatory “wildcard.” George’s primary assumption, as it needs to be reminded, is that the basis of all contemporary knowledge is the positivizing impetus contained in modern thought. The contradictions and tensions in realism supposedly then is traceable back to their philosophical bases. Interestingly, George’s “genealogy” of international relations then becomes teleological as he shows how positivism foreshadows the development of international relations at every stage. Realism, in this case, is shown to be moving along a path from it classical, traditional form to its very scientific rendering.¹¹⁴

¹¹³Richard O’Meara quoted in George, *Discourses of Global Politics* 116.

¹¹⁴One point can be made about George’s teleology: that to show realism’s ultimate transformation into a positivist project, its origins have to be solidified. Hence, the need to establish Thucydes, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau to be at realism’s foundations. Yet whether these philosophers can be seen as “realist” is itself in question. See for example, Michael C. Williamson, “Hobbes and International Relations: A Reconsideration,” *International Organization* 50.2 (1996): 213–236. Similarly R. B. J. Walker is uncertain if Hobbes and Machiavelli can be situated at realism’s beginnings. See his *Inside/Outside*, esp. ch. 5.

These attempts to re-present the contradictions and tensions within political realism as products of certain discursive circumstances, in Ashley's case, reduces realism to a coherent "community" and in Jim George's, it was subsumed by a larger, dominant discourse of (positivist) modernity. Yet to simply read Ashley, George and other postmodernists for what their texts appear to say, would be to misunderstand the political objectives towards which a particular (ironic) foundation or contingent reading of realism is important. This paradox between reading Ashley and George's texts for *what they are* rather than what they *intend to do* can best be located at comparing the responses made to the postmodern international relations literature in general and the stated objectives of the postmodernist scholars themselves.

First of all, systematic responses to the postmodern international relations literature have been few and far between. If there have been any, they would have come from very eclectic backgrounds responding either to specific essays or to the broader critical theoretical impulse in the field.¹¹⁵ This lack of mutual engagement over "positivism" reflects the lack of agreement over the epistemic foundations of the Third Debate, and if anything, bespeaks the irresolvable tensions between the mainstream and the postmodern. Nonetheless, there have been certain essays which do raise a few interesting ideas about the debate. I look therefore at Friedrich Kratochwil's "Errors have their Advantage" and Robert Gilpin's "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism" as the initial responses to the formative stages of Ashley's Critical/postmodernist thought.

¹¹⁵In this regard, John J. Mearsheimer's essay, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 19.3 (1994/95): 5-49; where he attempts to critique (however poorly) a group he calls the "critical theorists," and Robert O. Keohane's "International Institutions: Two Approaches," in his *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory* (Boulder, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1989) 158-179.

To begin, both responses fault Ashley on epistemological and methodological grounds, presuming the possibilities of an apolitical and foundational reading of international politics. Hence, Ashley is labelled a “polemic” and his “Poverty of Neorealism” deemed lacking in conceptual clarity.¹¹⁶ But it is Ashley’s categorization of both classical realism and neorealism that receives the strongest refutation. Kratochwil stresses that Ashley is “beating dead horses and straw men” because his understanding of realism as an ideal type is inherently questionable. Ashley is unable to verify that the “errors” of neorealism can be interrelated in such a way as to be associated with a larger whole, nor is he aware that the “neorealists” were themselves sceptical about being good “positivists.”¹¹⁷ Likewise, Gilpin, confessing that he is a “closet liberal,”¹¹⁸ insists that Ashley’s conceptualization of an all-inclusive neorealism emerges from a lack of (modernist) academic rigour:

First, [Ashley] equates neorealism with a series of particular philosophical positions. Next, he analyzes in turn each position as a surrogate for neorealism. And finally, employing a ready-made set of standard philosophical criticisms, he dispatches each surrogate and with it its alleged neorealist adherents. Thus, all neorealists are at once structuralists, physicalists, statist, utilitarians, positivists, determinists, and, by virtue of being all other things, totalitarians and imperialists as well. If Ashley finds a statement by a neorealist that happens not to mesh with one of these philosophical positions, rather than assuming that perhaps the “neorealist” writer does not in fact ascribe to the position in question, Ashley proceeds to accuse the individual of apostasy. One is enmeshed in a Catch-22.¹¹⁹

This establishment of Ashley’s faulty use of neorealism as an ideal type then allows Kratochwil and Gilpin to charge Ashley for having misread realist international relations. For instance Gilpin contends that Ashley has wrongly claimed Morgenthau and Carr as interpretivists since they were more scientifically-inclined, or that

¹¹⁶Kratochwil 305–06, 307–308; Gilpin 303.

¹¹⁷Kratochwil 311–312.

¹¹⁸Gilpin 321.

¹¹⁹Gilpin 303.

neorealism was returning to a traditional predilection for economics-based analyses.¹²⁰

This theme of reading and misreading, presumption of postmodern “heuristics” is echoed in some of the generalist responses to “critical theory” as well. In this case, John Mearsheimer misconprehends the diversity of “critical theorists” by associating them with a larger grouping he calls the institutionalists—a point of view he perceives to be detrimental to international politics that should be seen in “realist” terms. Here, critical theorists, according to him, “aim to transform the international system into a ‘world society,’ where states are guided by ‘norms of trust and sharing,’... [and] to relegate security competition and war to the scrap of history, and create instead a genuine ‘peace system.’”¹²¹ The point here is not so much Mearsheimer’s erroneous reading of “critical theorists” or his ideal typing of “critical theory”¹²² but his persistence in applying an action-driven, (material) result-oriented reading to this group of theorists. In other words, he reads “critical theory” from within his understanding of realist action. From this perspective, his assumption that “critical theorists” are out to create a “postmodern international system,” “alter state identity radically,” and to “transform” the basis of interstate conduct,¹²³ leads to his assertion that these “objectives” are logically flawed because they fail to provide any *explanation* to the question of discourse hegemony.¹²⁴ Inferentially, readings from the mainstream about the postmodernists’ reading of international relations would hark

¹²⁰Gilpin 306–313.

¹²¹Mearsheimer 37.

¹²²Here, Mearsheimer conflates a very diverse group of scholars into one political pole. Included in his list of “critical theorists” are, *inter alia*, Richard Ashley (in both his Critical and postmodernist incarnations), Robert Cox, James Rosenau, Ernst-Otto Czempiel, Friedrich Kratochwil, John Ruggie and Alexander Wendt. See Mearsheimer, note 128.

¹²³Mearsheimer 39.

¹²⁴Mearsheimer 42.

on a condition in modern scholarship—the presumption of a settled identity and the role of scholarship in theorizing, abstracting, explaining and predicting the course of this identity within the boundaries of a given discipline. As such, Kratochwil, Gilpin or Mearsheimer's writings assume that the fundamental flaw of these postmodernist writings is their lack of being critical about the *foundations* of realism since it is these foundations that the former presumes necessary for any project of critique.

This, however, does not appear to be what the postmodernist scholars are doing. Dwelling on postmodern strategies and not denying the postmodernists their right to the metaphoric and ironic use of language, one sees different articulations of objectives. Most notably, within the metaphor of “dissidence” and “exile,” postmodernist objectives are framed by various rallying tokens of “marginality” as in “resistance,” “subversion,” “politicization,” “disruption,” and “transgression.” For Ashley, therefore, writing becomes tied to the questioning of traditional practices and the “interpretations” of international politics—the reality—that has come to constitute it. It subsequently becomes possible to “explore ways in which, under various circumstances, these practices might be resisted or disabled; boundaries might be put in doubt and transgressed; representations might be subverted, deprived of the presumption of self-evidence, and politicised and historicised; new connections among diverse cultural elements might become possible; and new ways of thinking and doing global politics might be opened up.”¹²⁵ Within this language of dissidence, the objectives of the postmodern literature can be put more plainly; Jim George and David Campbell stress the need to expose the inadequacy of the positivist/empiricist project, revealing along the way the means by which knowledge has come to be created and marked-off as objective and real. In addition, there is also a need to show

¹²⁵ Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign State” 254.

that this reality is linguistically constructed. In all, the postmodern literature aims to “celebrate difference.”¹²⁶

While these avowed emphases of postmodern scholarship/politics rarely account for their silence on ontological questions, such as the presumption of a realist community or a positivistically-dominant realist discourse, the postmodern objectives mentioned above appear to provide some answers. Given that postmodern politics locates itself within the margins and refuses to associate itself with any sovereign voice of authority, its reading of realism becomes emplaced within an anti-foundational double-bind. It attempts to destabilize, render questionable discourse masquerading as reality, but at the same time (since postmodernism can never stand outside of modernism) it requires that the truth behind this assertion be, one way or another, substantiated. This disjuncture between the mainstream “realist” reading of postmodernism and the postmodernists’ reading of “realism” is thus the assumption that an authoritatively sovereign stance can be taken with regard to knowledge claims on the one hand, and the impossibility of knowing the truth in its depoliticized form on the other.

In what is presumed to be an essay located at the intersections between the mainstream and works of “dissidence,” “Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies,”¹²⁷ little assistance is proffered towards any understanding of the postmodernists’ anti-foundational knowledge claims. Co-authored with R.B.J. Walker, Ashley’s article situates the question of sovereignty through the reading and anticipation of several possible

¹²⁶Jim George and David Campbell, “Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference.” See also Jim George, “International Relations and the Search for Thinking Space: Another View of the Third Debate,” *International Studies Quarterly* 33.3 (1989): 269–279.

¹²⁷Richard K. Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, “Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 34.3 (1990): 367–416.

critical readings of “dissidence” works. In this sense, a large portion of the essay re-articulates what Ashley and Walker see as the mainstream’s comparison of its own virtues with the absence of such at the “margins”: for instance, “disciplinary authority” as opposed to the unsupported work written at the margins, maturity versus youthfulness, “commitment to a perspective” versus the lack of one, clarity of language as opposed to “elitist jargon,” evaluative standards versus relativism, and so on.¹²⁸ This merely essentializes the mainstream–postmodern divide without necessarily touching on the problem of truth. There is however one curious point that Ashley and Walker note concerning knowledge claims. This is that the mainstream readings do not rely on any established basis in their critique of postmodern works, and by so doing “put the question of their own truth in suspension, as a question that here and now need not be entertained.”¹²⁹

Let me now return to the theme of disjuncture and imperialism that lies at the heart of the present work. Disjuncture is just that strategy of contemporary colonial discourse that presides over the increasing impossibility to speak about imperialism, demonstrating on the one hand the increasing critical consciousness about its different incarnations, its persistence, and its moral travesties. On the other hand it also gives rise to the inclination in the modern social sciences to do away with imperialism altogether, clearing the terminological path for something more precise and less value laden. Such transformations are vital in understanding the continuing colonial desire in the west and how language, as Lacan would put it, undergoes transformation and substitution in order to articulate the demand of the western mentality: power, prestige, dominance, as well as the necessity of a continuously reinscribed colonial other. Hence the disjuncture in Rorty’s works produces an

¹²⁸ Ashley and Walker 373.

¹²⁹ Ashley and Walker 372.

incommensurable zone to discuss imperialism, privately allowing for the individual to rebuke the moral problems of empire while, at the same time, vindicating it through the necessity of the public or pragmatic realm. Likewise in the readings of the impossible debate between postmodern and mainstream international relations, there is just such a replication of western intellectualism's inability—and refusal—to move beyond the tension between the private and public domains. Even if postmodern IR appears to be overtly aware of the strictures of modernity and social science with regard to difference, there remains an insular indecisiveness about the other, in particular the ability to recognize its identity and agency.

In observing Ashley and George's treatment of realism and the numerous responses to their writings, it is possible to raise a number of issues about the intersection in which postmodernist IR, disjuncture, and imperialism meet. First it is difficult to extricate the private politics of postmodern consciousness from the larger production of western culture. Even if postmodernist IR is deeply concerned about difference, it is inherently wrapped up in pragmatic dissensions, such as the call for a more "inclusive" international relations or ways of enlarging/troubling its disciplinary boundaries. Consequently to the observer outside the framework of western intellectualism, this internal dispute must verge on absurdity, signaling the fragmentation of the western mind. It is also this breakup of western culture that creates the same anxieties as suffered by writers like Joseph Conrad and Samuel Huntington. Second while postmodernism allows imperialism to be appreciated in ways beyond what mainstream social science is capable of articulating, it is more silent about how empire is interpolated within its own ranks. Similarly postmodern IR provides a set of tools to implicate various discourses that dominate the representation of world politics but it is through inference that imperialism is recognized as one of those discourses. However in many cases the object of

postmodern IR's critique (as demonstrated here) has not been imperialism but realism; and as such the obscuring of empire raises many questions about its implied objectives. Inadvertently this struggle between the "critical" and the "realist" preserves the intellectual power of the west in that any alternative non-western imagination of the "political world" must first pay homage to the space that western postmodernism has cleared for it.

Conclusion

LIVING WITH DISJUNCTURE

On March 1st 1999, Australian television viewers who tuned into the feature news program, *A Current Affair*, were shown a story on the persisting problem of slavery in Africa. For a western audience that was complacent that slavery was an historical relic, such a story was meant to jar, bringing home the continuation of these inhumane travesties. The news story reported that the civil war in Sudan had produced a disparity in power between the Arab, Muslim controlled North, and the “black” Christian African South. As a consequence a sizeable number of the South’s population had become subjected to a “colonizing” ultimatum, either assimilate into Islam or be sold to the north Sudanese as slaves. Under such circumstances the slaves had no legal rights and were bartered, traded or sold either inside or outside north Sudan. Over the years the number of slaves has grown, inciting a need for intervention. This is where the news story appropriates the African locus and repatriates it to the west. In the midst of this plight, the story goes on further to report on the activities of a Swiss-based charity group called Christian Solidarity International that was actively raising funds in Europe and America so that their representatives could travel to Sudan and buy the Sudanese slaves their freedom. Since such efforts are not without their risks and dangers, namely incurring the displeasure of the Islamic north Sudanese regime, these sojourners become tacitly lionized as contemporary heroes.

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As the moral register is already inbuilt into the consuming culture for that news story, the reporter does not need to make any moral statements about the problem of slavery and the nobility of their rescuers. It is already implied. In effect the story is at once encapsulated by a particular teleology. First, the current problem of slavery in Africa is a residue of the slavery inaugurated during the earlier phase of modern European imperialism. Second, while people in the west are now conscious of the evils of slavery, the Africans are now doing it to themselves. Third it is now up to the west to come the rescue of the Sudanese slaves even though European imperialism was somewhat responsible for the political crises that have led to this slavery. This teleology re-incorporates colonial discourse by relegating the crises and political backwardness (characterized by civil war, famine, and despotism) of Africa to a different time and place, and once again establishes the west as the civilizing and liberating force. A paradox results out of this because slavery is indeed a material and physical problem that requires immediate attention, but its resolution cannot be effected without at the same time re-casting the shadow of imperialism in the long term. In this regard, one is left with very difficult choices to make: the physical freedom of the slaves cannot come without the further entrenchment of colonial discourse.

This contemporary problem of slavery and its representation demonstrates so much of the complexity in the way moral issues are appreciated and how their resolution usually returns to the west. In an era that would prefer to think of imperialism in historical terms comprising of the acquisition of colonies, the repatriation of peoples, cultures, and material resources, the maintenance of trading outposts, and the spreading of Christianity, there is refusal to pass a verdict about what that really meant. On the one hand, the romantics will argue, imperialism was civilizing and it brought modernization, development, and what was good about the

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west to darker skinned peoples of the world. On other hand, its critics have perceived imperialism as exploitation, domination, and appropriation. However, the problem is not so much that there are these two different groups of people in the west but that romanticism and condemnation of empire are both intricately connected; and virtually all the intellectuals examined in this thesis had elements of these coexisting in their works. Such contemporary reflections on “historical” imperialism are in themselves instances of a persistent and deep-seated desire in western culture to conceive of otherness in ways that are informed by imperialism. Hence even when physical colonies have all but vanished and a very different world has come in their place, imperialism continues to manifest itself in ways that are both old and new. As seen in the case of slavery, there are just such inflections in place: Africa is decolonized but yet its current problems as a residue of European rule continue to integrate the continent into the history of imperialism; the white liberators are emplaced in the footsteps of European missionaries, once again inculcating ideas of salvation.

It is important to stress that at heart of this thesis’ argument is disjuncture in which ideas, categories, time, and desire are contingent and incommensurable. This is the zone where seemingly opposing substances are interconnected, where cognate items lose their validity. Thus by claiming that imperialism is disjunctive one disavows modernity’s temptation to delineate it. For instance the division of an immoral imperial past from a progressive international present and the hyphenation of imperialism as economic, cultural, and military are strategies to make recent expressions of western power more acceptable. This idea is difficult to grasp because the epistemological framework western subjects are tied to, is still grounded on modernity’s need of delineation: substances have to be distinct, identities have to be intact, a given concept has to be different from others. In other words, disjuncture

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cannot, in terms of the limits of our current vocabulary, be reconciled into rationalism. For now, disjuncture is extremely important because it enables recent cultural production to be interpolated into colonial discourse.

I have shown how this disjuncture operates in the social science discipline of international relations. This is an important juxtaposition to make because while there are many works in colonial discourse theory that have attempted to establish the relationship between empire and different forms of literary activity that took place during the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries, there are comparatively fewer with regards to imperialism in the late 20th century. For example many attempts have been made to establish such endeavours like anthropology, philology, geography, natural history, travel writing, and imaginative fiction with a certain will to dominate. These disciplines are anything but objective accounts of the non-western world but were in effect complicit with a machinery to represent them in ways that legitimize the task of empire building. Thus, the peoples in western occupied places became subjected to descriptions that were highly strategic and malleable. Depending on the facet of imperialism—whether or not it was to Christianize, civilize, dominate, appropriate, or to satisfy a craving for the exotic—these disciplines created an eclectic repository of descriptions of the colonial other that could be molded for any purpose. Imperial disjuncture therefore allowed the colonized peoples to be characterized as barbaric, savages, heathens, alluring, child-like, and mysterious while silencing the contradictory nature of these terms. With the end of formal colonialism, it is questionable whether or not such strategies have ended or if these disciplines continue to have a similar relationship with current forms of imperialism. In effect the dearth of academic work interrogating the relationship between the contemporary incarnations of these disciplines and western hegemony raises questions about how empire—past and present—is to be understood today. After all, with the end of the

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British Empire and the creation of the postwar “international” world, the social sciences’ hold on the immediately tangible, quantifiable, and visible evidence of imperialism came to be uprooted by an American form of domination that is more enveloped in ambivalence, euphemisms, and moral anxieties. These include for example America’s professed anti-imperial policies, its uncertainty about the use of power, its romantic aspiration for greatness, and its preference of “leadership” over “hegemony.”

If that American form of domination gives purchase to the continued presence of imperialism, albeit in a more disguised and subversive form, it is all the more important that the cultural and intellectual works that are produced alongside it be investigated as well. To this end, this thesis has argued that, in recent times, imperialism and the discipline of international relations are intimately interconnected, and that it is impossible to think of either without reference to the ambivalence and disjuncture that lies at the core of western culture. My intention was not to dismiss the disciplines colonial writings used in so many earlier discussions in colonial discourse theory; even in their present forms they continue to reshape one’s conception of empire. However, IR is a unique case because unlike other disciplines, it is relatively new and its ambitiousness in representing and imagining the world as a novel political creation different and separate from the European imperial system belies the desire and ironies that connect it to the imperial past. If the new international world claims to be composed of sovereign nation-states, all competing, in some cases cooperating, for power, wealth, and other resources, the theories and methods used to study their patterns, systems, and interaction attempt to elevate the imagination of the world from its earlier models. Yet in many ways imperialism returns to overshadow such descriptions. I asserted that this form of imperialism is best located in textuality and the worldliness that makes intertextual transmissions

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possible. Using Edward Said's notion of contrapuntal reading, I stressed that while the texts of imperialism and IR appear to be of different genres, there are underlying cultural nuances that make them inseparable. For instance a movie series like *Star Trek* deftly demonstrates such counterpoints, tracing a continued romanticism for imperial travel, the so-called moral awareness of the problems of empire, and recent developments in international politics. These counterpoints do not end here and they permeate into the production of otherness. This is an important point to stress for IR because it is always very easy to state that earlier colonial writings did their trick by strategies like Orientalism where the non-western world was presented as different to the west. What about the flipside to this movement? If these colonial writings needed the other to be effective, how did the increasing assimilation of colonized into the modernity, western culture, and so on sustain the project of imperialism? This is where disjuncture becomes more pronounced because it relies on the ambivalence produced by desire. This is a psychoanalytical concept in which an individual's identificational needs can never be rationally satisfied; and the substances of self and other can never be reconciled. Hence just when it appears that the west is widening its basis of identification through globalization, there is still a very dynamic process of otherness operating underneath. This is both a calculated and subconscious action simultaneously causing a vacillation between revulsion and desire for the other. With a few exceptions, this dynamism is often not discussed in colonial writings and it is within international relations that such forms of ambivalence and otherness materialize. In a number of IR writings, for instance, the global political process has been remarked as a new entity universal to all nation states. But just as these writings claim that everyone or every state is the same, there is a very volatile economy lying underneath that continues the process of colonial othering. Typically what was

thought of as barbaric or savage world outside now transposes over to IR's neologisms of despotism or illiberal practices.

By extending these concepts of disjuncture—counterpoint, textuality, ambivalence, desire, and otherness—it is possible to see so many other aspects of IR as complicit with imperialism. In one of the chapters I examined the appropriation of imperialism by the United States and argued that the writings of realist IR scholars (like Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Liska) are not descriptions of novel global political phenomena. At the very outset these writings echo the US “anti-imperialist” debate during the turn of the last century in that no matter which way the debate went, it returned to romanticize and celebrate the greatness of American power and institutions. But this celebration is not without its moral tensions and when transposed into international relations it creates indecisiveness about the discipline's avowed objectivity and the historical mission the US upholds. These realist IR writings subsequently reflect the anxieties of how the discipline could be moral while at the same time promote the state's interests. If the turn of the century produced so much anxiety and soul-searching for the US, it also led to similar tensions in the imaginative fiction and travel writing on the other side of the Atlantic. While Joseph Conrad was a product of a different empire, his works also exemplified that inability to reconcile “goodness” and “evil” in imperialism. In effect Conrad more appropriately demonstrates the disillusionment with Britain at the peak of its imperial power because his romantic views of imperialism—the act of discovery and exploration, the nobility of White civilization—had all but vanished. In the empire of Conrad's adulthood one finds that there are no more lands to discover or no knowledge of foreign cultures to repatriate, but in its place was a calculated, militarized, and political scramble by Europe for foreign territories. Almost a century later at a reciprocal juncture of American imperialism it is possible to witness such

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forms of Conradian ambivalence in IR. In particular I examined the works of political scientist, Samuel Huntington and noted that US anxieties about the end of the cold war, the uncertainty of the new world order, and decline of US power lead to IR writings that are both critical and condemnatory of imperialism but also indulgent about the grandeur and responsibilities of the United States.

In all these assessments of international relations as expressions of uncertainty, tension, and ambivalence in imperialism, there is an overall movement towards moral self-consciousness. In other words there is growing awareness about the pervasiveness, depth, and scope of imperialism and increasing need to rectify or to exercise restraint in the dispensation of power. It is unlikely that, under the present regime of modernity, such moral consciousness will lead to the dismantling of imperialism and a conceptualization of international relations exterior to western culture. As such, if the development of critical consciousness culminates with the emergence of postmodernism in IR, then it is the point at which imperialism reaches its most disjunctive stage. This is the moment of finality, a disguised version of liberal history where the teleological end of history is dismissed even though postmodernism revels in the death of author and subject: the improbability for knowledge-as-we-know-it to go any further. Yet the question of otherness remains open and alongside this remains the hidden power of the west to redescribe to its advantage. In this respect postmodern IR becomes split between its critical re-openings and its persisting western self-referentiality and involution. But examined through the works of American postmodernist Richard Rorty this splitting comes to be more pronounced and intense. Like Huntington, Rorty possesses anxiety in the direction American society is taking and his avowed essentialism and commitment to US national pride and patriotism make his work appear ethnocentric. As a matter of fact he accuses the "cultural left" (presumably comprising of some postmodernists) of contributing to the

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fragmentation and disarray of US society in recent times. But what does not sit comfortably with such views is that a large portion of his philosophy relies on the antifoundational and anti-essential postmodernism that primarily go against the grain of these sentiments. Rorty's resolution is one of disjuncture: he promotes a postmodernism that also relies and builds on Liberalism, and he also charts out a space in which the private and public realms interoperate. Under this schema Rorty believes that a politics of difference comes to have purpose and the ability to act rather than to be just vainglorious, personal reflections. Thus for postmodern international relations, Rorty's writings serve as a reminder of the incommensurable pragmatism that underpin critiques of say, realism. Through the examples of Richard Ashley and Jim George such a disjuncture demonstrate that willingness to redescribe IR's vocabulary as a contingent way of opening up the discipline to difference. Since postmodernism cannot effect the emancipation of those acknowledged by its politics of difference, such writings defer answering questions about its commitment to otherness or about its tacit affirmation of the west.

While the ideas contained in this thesis stress that it is vital to think disjunctively in order to see a clearer picture of the relationship between international relations and imperialism, there is no certainty as to how this disjuncture will not in itself echo the incommensurability between critical consciousness and western dominance. There are no answers to this nor is it possible to suggest if international relations can disengage itself from empire. Until it is possible to institute a notion of disjuncture within truly postcolonial context, its utility remains largely a way of broadening the scope of colonial discourse theory and how this is to be thought of in recent times. If international relations must now be thought of as an imperial discipline the way anthropology, literature, and geography can be conceived as colonial disciplines, the goals of this thesis would have been met.

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