

Other Asias

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Foreword¹

"Liberal arts professors tend to be arrested young people."

Stephen Metcalf

Literary criticism in general has become more interested in globalization in the twenty-first century. Because of my sustained interest in checking out generalizations by seeking entry into subaltern spheres, I was not fully satisfied with the general cultural arguments about postmodernism. And now I find myself, for similar reasons, equally uneasy about the received ideas about culture and globalization. Indeed, I had been uneasy about this for some time. Earlier I had called the problem "electronification of the stock exchanges."² In these essays the dissatisfaction is with the easy postnationalism that is supposed to have come into being with globalization. The solution pondered (not proposed outright, for such things are practical and situational) is "critical regionalism." It helps me that Comparative Literature was regionalist even in its first disciplinary impulses.

The chapters in this book were written before the events of September 11, 2001. It is clear now

that the main theatre of the War on Terror is Asia. The whole of Asia from West Asia to North East Asia has become the theatre of the war. It started in Central Asia with immediate consequences for South Asia. Already in January 2002, President Bush included North Korea in the "axis of evil." Soon after, the "second front" was officially opened in the Philippines in South East Asia.³ ... In West Asia, also called the Middle East, the ongoing wars against Palestine and Iraq were intensified and declared to be part of the War on Terror. March 20, 2003 marked the US "strike on Iraq" for occupation.⁴

As I prepare the final draft, there is the enterprise of news management over aid to the tsunami of 2004, legitimizing the war by its apparent

reversal. India has refused foreign aid. Indonesia wants international troops unarmed, however benevolent. Asia news.⁵

The fiftieth anniversary of the first Bandung conference on Asian–African cooperation, organized this time by South Africa, has rekindled hope of a new regionalism. Yet the forces against regionalism are strong.

Asia in the twenty-first century presents a forbidding picture to the United States in terms of her national security interests. A rapidly threatening China, a resurgent Russia and an extremely hostile and violent Muslim world confronts [*sic*] the United States. Military flashpoints that are confronting or likely to confront the United States can be listed as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the rapidly rising military power of China, aimed at expelling US military presence in East Asia. Taiwan would emerge as the pretext and the flashpoint.⁶

The signing of the nuclear accord between the United States and India can be seen as an effort to separate India from the possibility of Asian regionalism.⁷

This book, however, is not a polemic against or discussion of the events cited above. I have kept it as it is in the conviction that now more than ever it is important for us not to let the plurality of Asia be selectively studied according to the directions of US foreign policy. First and foremost, the texts offered here provide exercise for imagining pluralized Asias, preparing for an “other” principle of study – that will toughen the polemic when it arises in response to specific situations. That I believe is the role of the humanities, the empowerment of an informed imagination, a modest but difficult task.

I would like to distinguish my position from the pan-Asianism that we have known since the nineteenth century in figures such as Shinpei Goto, Sun Yat Sen, and Rabindranath Tagore.⁸ My position is not competitive with other continents.⁹ The pluralized Asia I am thinking of not only respects, but attempts to know the differences within Asia as imaginatively as possible. My field is not policy studies. It is comparative literature. I go toward accessing the other through deep language learning in the collectivity of the classroom. I believe that, paradoxically enough, learning to know our differences keeps leading toward all those words that policy studies conjure with: peace, justice, the rights of humanity. Keeps leading, and not inevitably. It is a persistent effort at training the imagination, a task at which we have failed through the progressive rationalization of education all over the world.

In order not only to destabilize capitalism, but to turn capital toward the social, the electorate must be trained in the habits and rituals of democracy. Not once and for all but persistently, forever. One never closes the schools. The lead piece in the book, "Righting Wrongs," delivered at the Oxford chapter of Amnesty International in 2002, discusses the nature of such training. It is a way to keep alive a spirit that might not just want to be "like America, with culture thrown in." Humble as it is, it is the description of the making of another Asia, if you like. The debate between Michael Doyle and Jack Snyder, my colleagues, as to whether we can build a community of democracies worldwide, or whether sudden democratization leads to war, is put within an international frame if one realizes that there can be no democracy if the largest sector of the electorate has no intuition of the public sphere and its relationship to constitutionality.¹⁰ War and peace come after; and no elections can ever be considered fair without this.

It seems unquestionable that sustainable change takes place if change in the human mind supplements institutional change. This conviction itself supplements the other, that institutional change (always in the broadest sense) brings change of mind – epistemic change. Both views seem right. It is only when the latter is projected by rather pre-critical notions of the mental theater and these projections begin to affect policy in a large-scale way that both familiarity with ceaseless subalternization and the lessons learned in the classroom begin to assert themselves. If there are significant epistemic changes underfoot, we "read" the apparent change, often consolidated by the desire of the dominant to have it so. These changes may be described as the "pre-emergent" that Raymond Williams signaled so long ago.¹¹ The student of the *socius* must learn to track them, and having tracked them, write them in such a way that the readers of the indefinite future, unencumbered by our specific topicalities, may inhabit them, follow them. It is in this responsibility of writing that thought may become a textual blank for others to suture that makes the confident diagnoses of changes in the "structures of feeling" accompanying globalization banal.¹²

Even if such diagnoses were correct, they describe the effects of institutional change as event. It seems necessary to insist on the distinction between event and task. The ethico-political task of the humanities has always been rearrangement of desires. It must be repeated that the task of the rearrangement of desires engages the imagination of teacher and student – in a pedagogic situation. Any theory of the

imagination which uses the English word “imagination” is no doubt linked in some way with the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German theories. Our effort, however, is to reduce and rarefy this definition to a vulgar minimum – the ability to think absent things. The careful reader will immediately notice that this is almost indistinguishable from thought itself, in its lowest common denominator. That is indeed where pedagogy of the humanities sort starts in its efforts to rearrange desires. If the idea of the imagination thickens into a more literary vehicle – the literary being the terrain where the ability to think absent things has free reign – that does not necessarily mean that the specific rearrangement of desires that may be on the agenda has been successfully accomplished. This is the first constraint. Humanities teaching simply exercises the imagination, makes it ready for such rearrangement.

When the student receives substantive instruction in other matters – history, politics, economics and business, anthropology and cultural studies, science and technology – in school or out, one hopes that an active and robust imagination cannot not engender possibilities that are not necessarily contained in their dominant versions, radical or conservative. I say again and again, there is no guarantee for this. Yet collectivities are not formed without this, change does not stick. This is the second constraint upon the task. To dismiss this as individualistic is tragically shortsighted. And to read literature as evidence of the author’s political inclinations is to undo the special gift of the literary.¹³

There is an encompassing constraint within which all work is held. One cannot not coerce while one teaches, however at ease the teacher–class situation may be. Whatever happens, happens in spite of scrupulously intended teaching. That something will have happened is the assurance and constraint in view of which one makes the attempt for a collective rearrangement of desires.

It is the third essay, “Will postcolonialism travel?,” focused on Armenia, that taught me the most. I began it with the question of postcolonialism in mind. The occasion for it was a question two former students asked in 1994. The effort to answer took me clear out of the theory of postcolonialism on the model of the history of South Asia. As I kept worrying at it, it took me into the oil route and the complicity of dominant feminism with the march of capitalist globalization.

I was simply not satisfied with the piece, unable to grasp Armenia within that problematic. One of the major problems was the lack of

knowledge of Armenian. Postcoloniality cannot be engaged without at least a rudimentary sense of its idiom.¹⁴

But globalism can. As soon as my search encountered Armenia's positioning in the efforts of the Minsk group, the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), UNESCAP, USAID and the like, its position on the oil line, I began to see this small bit of the Caucasus differently. I began to realize how uncertain the shifting outlines of "regions" can be. The fierce nationalism of a millennially diasporic group, Christian in a sea of Islam, has been ready for "postcoloniality" for a long time, but it is very much in the global. I hope the reader will read the essay on Armenia realizing that it is a learning text.

"Righting Wrongs" is a critique of globalism as universalism. It lays out in detail the argument that I began with – engaging the imagination in pedagogy – as a requirement for generating the subject of Human Rights.

This is a general comment on what is now a finished book. What follows is a more personal glance at the writing of it.

I go back 10 years in "Responsibility." The work I describe in 2002, in the first essay, had already started, by happenstance. But I did not know how to code it yet. The best I could do was to think of it as an intellectual challenge. Can I suspend my own training and learn from people with no institutional education? How good is theory at this? I needed to ask. The language is a little forbidding in that essay, because I could not ask the question of theory without entering its protocols. The chief focus of the piece is still the World Bank, not today's broad network of the international civil society. If section one of that chapter is not to your taste, skip it.

"Foucault and Najibullah" was written in 1996 in response to the death of the last Communist president of Afghanistan. It did not seem connected to the occasional earlier piece on Armenia. Putting them together for this volume, the connections came through. I had always felt Derrida's work to be more useful for ethico-political practice than Foucault's. The combination of "Responsibility" and "Foucault and Najibullah" makes it appear. After 9/11 Afghanistan became international news. I have wanted to keep the first flavor of the piece, and revised lightly.

While I was writing these essays, the Balkans and post-Soviet scholarship in general wanted to tap me for postcolonialism, but I did not connect those invitations to diversity with what I was

writing. I wrote as follows to a student group that questioned me on this new direction:

“Colonizer” and “colonized” can be fairly elastic if you define scrupulously. When an alien nation-state establishes itself as ruler, impressing its own laws and systems of education, and re-arranging the mode of production for its own economic benefit, one can use these terms, I think. The consequences of applying them to a wide array of political/geographic entities would be dire if we thought colonialism had only one model. On the other hand, if we noticed how different kinds of adventures and projects turn into something that would fit the bare-bones description given above, we would have a powerful analysis of the politics of progressivism, of one sort or another. How do political philosophies of social justice relate to the overdeterminations of practical politics? This venerable question would receive interesting answers if we considered the irreducibility of the colonial in a situation-specific and flexible way. Additionally, if we cast our glance at the place(s) colonized (according to the rarefied formula above), we encounter great heterogeneity. This provides us an opportunity to study the politics of cultural and epistemic transformation.

The problem with applying these terms to the area you cover would be merely to follow the three most powerful models of colonial discourse theory currently available, belonging to the Middle East, South Asia and Latin America. These refer to colonial adventures undertaken by single nations as exploration and conquest nourished by mercantile capitalism – followed by the expanding market needs of industrial capital. By contrast, your area displaced the political lines of old multi-ethnic imperial formations, Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian. The Eastern edge pushes into terrain that would be even further from the single-nation model. Another great difference is the presence of an articulated ideal – versions of “scientific socialism” – which gave a seemingly greater specificity to the epistemic change. Although the single-nation model was almost invariably accompanied by explicit or implicit “civilizing missions,” they did not dictate the political and economic structure of the colonial state directly.

When we look at these differences we realize that using the colonizer–colonized model creatively in your area will enhance existing colonial discourse and postcolonial studies as well as provide you with an interesting model.

Historically, it has always been the powerful who have spoken or been spoken of. I don’t know enough about the area under study to go into detail here but, as a feminist and a subalternist, I am used to looking at the pores of elite texts to tease out excluded itineraries. As we move eastwards, the nature of the texts changes. Here, my

disciplinary commitments kick in. I want us to use the literary imagination to read sagas and chronicles. As for the postcolonial material, I always go in search of the gendered subaltern. I spoke with women from inner Asia 10 years ago, and to folks from former Soviet Armenia more recently. They spoke of the difficulty of communication with their mothers – and for sure their grandmothers – because Russian gets in the way. (This linguistic barrier crosses the gender line: it was to penetrate this barrier that Najibullah, the last Communist president of Afghanistan, was translating *The Great Game* into Pashto when he died.)¹⁵ The fracturing of gender is somewhat different from the nationalist insistence on native-language politics in the “new” nations bordering on the Russian Federation. However one approaches this, it seems to me a fertile field for real language-based Comparative Literature, much more like Cultural Studies than the older model of East European Comp. Lit. – where the discipline began. Colonial discourse and postcolonial studies have not been good with languages. The areas you study can certainly turn this around. I have long said that history should join hands with literary criticism in search of the ethical as it interrupts the epistemological. Your field can offer spectacular opportunities for such interdisciplinary work.¹⁶

Reading “Other Asias” assembled, I realized that Armenia and Afghanistan had already led me into this expansion. In both cases, I had been at pains to show how they could not fit the discursive axiomatics of the already-existing postcolonial model. None of these diversifications had much interest in feminism. And it was the collaboration of dominant feminism with the new imperialism that connected this new position with my criticism of the old postcolonialism in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*.¹⁷ This appears most strongly in the conclusion to chapter 3.

I had never been persuaded by Latin-American competition for postcolonialism. On the contrary, *The Lettered City* and *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City* had convinced me that the histories of imperialism in South Asia and Latin America were too close to compete.¹⁸ The history of colonialism in Africa also fits the earlier existing postcolonial model. The case of the Asia-Pacific was, however, significantly different. At my own university, my East Asianist colleague Charles Armstrong wanted no part of postcolonial theory. Yet Wu Hung’s work in metropolitan China seemed to me to be an important bit of postcolonialist work.¹⁹ Liao Ping-hui was claiming postcolonial writing for Taiwan. I gathered as much of this debate as I could for an encyclopedia

entry.²⁰ More and more, it seemed to me that the expanding versions of postcolonial theory would have to “pluralize” Asia, rather than singularize it so that it was nothing but one’s own region. And that intuition of Asian plurality is prefigured in “Our Asias,” the last piece in this book.

In “Our Asias,” I am called to speak as an “Asian” in the heart of the Asia-Pacific. I suggested there that we should not think of our own corner as exemplary of our continent, that we might try to pluralize our continent. This would be the thinking of “other Asias” from above, from the university. I was writing the Amnesty piece “Righting Wrongs” while I was in Hong Kong. I was beginning to understand that “other” is not simply a matter of imaginative geography but also of discontinuous epistemes. The largest sector of the Asian electorate of the future occupies another epistemic space from the readers of “Our Asias.” That other understanding of another Asia is at the conclusion of the lead piece. Who knows if the democratic structure of the state will become more regional in the coming generations? The ongoing effort to build another Asia – not necessarily in the image of the current dominant (a “selfsame,” “proper,” “authentic” Asia) – can belong to that future.

In 1997, I was beginning to understand the preparation of another Asia as a setting to work. I asked the question of “Responsibility” again, but now in the context of the city. Will theory work in the understanding of the megacity? As I insist now, arguments about megacities, based usually on body count, invoke built space as a signifier of a transformed episteme.²¹ The episteme itself is constructed by the critics metonymically, who take the cyber mind to stand for the whole world. This metonymic postmodern subject, master of information command, and inhabitant of virtuality, makes no room for the intuition of the transcendental. This brings me to another point, which I will approach circuitously, by way of a word on the discursive style of this book.

All my teaching life I have soldiered against mere specialism. In the hands of great scholars, creative specialism can be instructive. But mere specialism, which is the lot of most scholars, is often restrictive, exclusivist, keeping itself comfortable in the indefinitely iterated conviction that the essence of knowledge is knowledge about knowledge. Like Kant’s mere reason, its method is calculation, and its substitute for responsibility – *die Verantwortlichkeit* – in the robust general sense is accountability – *die Zurechnungsfähigkeit* – in the narrow sense of institutionally acknowledgeable competence.²² This competence, according to a minimal understanding of disciplinary method, is all that the mere specialist teaches his or her student.

I think it is particularly unfortunate when teachers in the humanities refuse to live in the world and continue to contribute to their trivialization by insisting on giving their students “literary skills” alone, whatever that might mean.

Over against such restrictive specialism, there is a generalism that tries to make connections, assembling ad hoc scholarship as an aid to thinking. This problem-solving model is more like the strategy of paramedical primary health care – where the fieldworkers learn about a disease from volunteer doctors when they encounter it – than like the assured competence of qualified medical practitioners.²³

The problem with mere generalism is ignorant speculation. What one wants is supplementation from “volunteer doctors.” The root sense of “doctor” is teacher, after all. Thus my generalist work looks forward to an understanding judgment from the specialists rather than a rejection based on a minimal definition of disciplinary method equated with access to acceptable knowledge.

The essays that follow may qualify for an earlier mode of generalism. In the fifties, when I was an undergraduate at Presidency College, Kolkata, Charles Lamb’s *Essays of Elia* was one of the set texts for the English Honors bacculaureate at Calcutta University.²⁴ Through this whimsical and instructive book I was introduced to the familiar essay. The essays in the book you hold in your hand are familiar essays, I think. The writer’s life-details are always shadowily present, because the familiar essay is neither autobiography nor impartial analysis, though it courts both. It is certainly not disinterested. Indeed, the line of its interest is what makes it worth reading.

What has been my interest? Going over these occasional essays, I would say I have tried to negotiate my reluctant positioning in US academic postcolonialism without falling into identitarianism. It is because of this position, I think, that I have strained to imagine “Asia” – for I cannot construct my birthplace Bengal into the authentic contender for the cat seat of the West or Europe figured broadly. This detail, a matter of political taste, commands *Other Asias*.

As I sat revising in Honolulu, this seemed to me a good move. “Asia” is not a place, yet the name is laden with history and cultural politics. It cannot produce a naturalized homogeneous “identity.” The name “Pacific” has the same salutary absence of a naturalized homogeneous identity that can be immediately connected to it. It can therefore serve to set limits to mere identitarianism in any one of the politico-geographical entities, “from Taiwan to New Zealand,” with Hawaii,

the Marquesas, and the Easter Islands on its eastern edge, as “Asia” can contain ours.²⁵ It is not insignificant that the “Asia-Pacific,” claiming all of “Asia,” jumps over the Pacific.

There is no specialist scholarship in this book. The familiar essay relies on what used to be called general knowledge. In the case of Armenia I struggled against my own sanctioned ignorance. I am not sure that I have been able to put together a convincing suggestion, but the risk seemed worth taking. In the case of “Moving Devi” it is a lot of unconnected bits that float up at the thought of the Great Goddess. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and the name of “Asia” lie somewhere in between. The lesson of Armenia is the lesson that Asia is about to break anew along the line of Eurasia, so that its othering may come to have a different meaning. I am just learning to grapple with Turkey. Yet Japan had seemed to break away from Asia at a certain point. The vanishing present remains the focus of work such as this.

It is this last characteristic of the familiar essay – an unscholarly yet scrupulous inquiry – that seems most troubling to specialist readers. I am helpless here. I did not set out to write a specialist’s book, but simply a “postcolonial” book that would be an example against identitarianism.

No particular word needs to be said about the pervasive feminism of this book. All my writing is marked by this.

As you will see, my book is full of hope.

Yet, I have also been cautious. Speaking directly to traditional healers in South Africa (University of the Free State, March, 2004), I said precisely that they must not accept statements that indigenous knowledge is “science,” and gave them the Indian example of how it can lead to violence.

I say this because “Moving Devi,” read inattentively, may seem too “religious.” As I understand it, it is an example of the effort to de-transcendentalize the sacred, to move it toward imagination, away from belief, in which the secular humanities must forever engage. If a charge of obscurity is brought against it, I accept. I was called to speak as an Indian hyphenated with the United States, and this is what emerged. In it I attempt to think like an Indian-American doing identitarian cultural studies. It certainly gives the lie to the metonymic hypertextual subject of the megacity, and takes into account Manuel Castells’s suggestion that identitarianism, feminist among others, manages its crisis.²⁶ I construct myself as a counterexample that will not allow the clichés of

hybridity to work. I expect my usual detractors will make their usual detractions. Nothing I do or say will please them.²⁷

Following a longstanding trend in my work and thought, describing the de-transcendentalization of alterity, "Moving Devi" sees the object of religious belief not as reference but as the permissible narratives that constitute material culture. By contrast, Sayyid Qutb's *In the Shade of the Qur'an* presents sacred text as reference.²⁸

Thus, "Moving Devi" may be read within the context of de-transcendentalizing religion as *maya* or fiction; rather than confronting religion with the stern command of one version of the European Enlightenment: privatize; especially since dominant culturalism sees religion as a public bond of identity that never confronts the question of belief.²⁹ The essay can also be read in celebration of women – rural women, destitute widows – who do not necessarily swell the rank of the Hindu nationalists. As for the depredations of referential socialism, my work on socialist ethics has been thirty one years in the making. I still do not know if I can write it as the world changes – but let me end with promise of future work. For now: rearrange the desires of the largest sector of the future electorate, break postcolonialism into pluralized (Eur)Asias, train the metropolitan imagination to de-transcendentalize the transcendental – your move.

I have not been able to think Israel into Asia. I said to Matti Peled in 1984 that Asia had two absurdities at its two ends: Israel and Japan.³⁰ Japan has stepped into the Asia-Pacific for me. Israel sticks like a thorn in the side of other Asias.

There is no China here.³¹ One certainly hopes for an alliance between China and India, but that regionalism is on quite another register, on the terrain of the fantasmatic level playing field. The old arguments about the social productivity of capital and the new disappointments about economic growth have play here. But that is precisely the register whose claims are unconvincing when subalternity is engaged and recalled. For me, this painstaking effort has just begun in China. On a more superficial level as well, China is changing so radically, specifically with a view to its language(s), that to think of it as writable as an "other Asia" is beyond me. I cannot yet know what the opening of the frontier at Nathu La Pass in July, 2006 will bring. The event is rich in historical textuality. Here upon this impenetrable terrain – the "natural border" of the high Himalayas – it is not without significance that the words mean "listening ear." *Critical regionalism!*

The Pass is part of the historic Silk Road, scene of the Great Game, played out in chapters 5 and 6. In the newspaper photographs the Indian faces, one of them female, are smiling, but the Chinese faces are grim. I hope this is just the protocol of the soldiers' uniform; perhaps the British-era fancy dress of the Indian frontier police calls for a different body language.

As I continue revising this introduction, I am on my way to Bandung where, on April 18–25, 1955, 29 states from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean opted for a new economic policy that was finally sacrificed on the altar of nationalism. As Nigel Harris writes:

The semantic history of politics is full of ideas that begin life as a radical indictment of the existing social order, but over the years pass neutered into the everyday lexicon.... The "Third World" is no longer seen as a political alternative and merely denotes a group of countries.³²

What is the lesson of this? To take other Asias into the outlines of the globe, in the double bind of texture and structure.

Indeed, the lesson of Bandung can be compared to the lesson I have learned in my attempt to understand postcoloniality in the context of the Southern Caucasus. My efforts bear witness to its displacement into globalization. The reinvention of Bandung, hailed by everyone in 1955 as a postcolonial effort ("in your midst are old friends I knew in London years ago, where I first became part of the movement for colonial freedom," wrote Paul Robeson at the time), is being hailed today as a call to confront the problems of globalization.³³ At this point to locate the obvious weaknesses of Anglo-US-based postcolonial theory and call for a universalism emerging out of the most "European" of the Balkans can be no more than an academic holding action, just as to dismiss post-structuralism because it "rejects science" or is confined to verbal texts or books is simply uninformed.³⁴

Text means web. I was shown on the Internet a document which claims that the earthquake in Bam, Iran, on December 26, 2003, a result of overbuilding due to capitalist globalization, has nothing to do with textuality. The version I was shown ends with a picture of an anonymous victim and the caption "What textuality?"

To get an answer to this one must pay attention to what Marx started: to show the text, the web, of capital-formation and capitalism to the worker, who then could have a hand in changing it. The worker, for Marx, was most emphatically not a victim, but the agent

of production. I have written in the first essay about efforts to show the subaltern child that s/he is the agent not the victim, of what is still called "democracy." A longstanding textual project, if text is understood as web, rather than printed words on a page. (A big part of this project is now destroyed, confronted by the feudalism of the old latifundia system, flourishing in the grass roots, beyond the ken of the international civil society, because they cannot wait to learn the idiom.)

This particular colleague also claims that to cite a problem in the English translation of Marx is to "privatize." He must remember that English is not the only public language on earth. We cannot learn all languages, but we can learn some. As of this writing, I have persuaded at least one Italian translator of Mahasweta Devi's fiction not to translate from my English version but to consult appropriate members of the local Bangladeshi-Italian community. Is that to privatize?

Next, a word about singularity. For me, it is the repeatable difference that beings share. In my understanding, this is an immense simplification of the solution offered by Spinoza to the problem of ethical universalism. To every invocation of singularity is attached the double bind of the call to rational universalism. The agent-subject distinction in my work is a way of marking this double bind. None of this can matter to the universalists or the specificitarians, since they are not interested in the real-worldly problems created for the ethico-political by the specificities of the mental theater, which continually stages a reasonable or consistent scenario backed up by other resources.

I place these untimely essays in your hand. If you are going to engage with them, be fair. No abuse, please. Bear with them, or lay them aside, if they manage to rattle you. I am not out to convert the world.

Chapter 7

Our Asias¹ – 2001: How to Be a Continentalist

Argument: There is no original unity to the name “Asia.” When we claim the name today we are divisive. To repair this, Social Sciences and Humanities must come together. The production of knowledge must be supplemented by the training of the imagination. We respect efforts at unity in Asian-America, but they cannot be our model. In conclusion to the book, I bring the broader political argument into the classroom.

Asia

The general argument of my book has been to regionalize Asia politically. But what is Asia? Should we train our imagination to allow “Asia” to emerge as a continent? The word “Asia” reflects Europe’s eastward trajectory. It is as impossible to fix the precise moment when “Europe” became a proper name for a real and affective space as it is impossible to fix the moment when a “European” first used the name “Asia.” Did the Hittite Assiuvans call themselves “Assiuvans” in the second millennium BC, down to the last woman and child? Given that that would be nation-think long before its time, such speculation seems useless. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* tells us that the current rural population of Turkey is palpably descended from the Hittites. What does one make of such visual markers in terms of cultural transfer? The fact remains that Turkey is in a punitive progression toward the European Union. When the word “Asian” is used colloquially, we do not immediately think of Turkey unless the context dictates it. And because of this inexorable move to Europeanity, the break between rural and urban Turkey is a cultural rift.

It is well-known that in that very millennium the Mycenaean Greeks fought with the Hittites. Homer, writing about the Mycenaean attack upon Troy, a city in Northwest Asia Minor, finds in Asia a natural metaphor for human movement – the movement of Greeks into Troy. It is the first famous picture of a place called Asia, only an adjective and a vehicle: “And as the many tribes of winged birds, wild geese or cranes or long-necked swans on the Asian meadow by the streams of Caÿstrius, fly here and there,” Homer uses the same words “*ethnea polla*” – many tribes – for both birds and men.² There is certainly no trace in this text of the folks the Mycenaeans perhaps knew as Assiuvans. The Trojans are built in the image of the Greeks. In the 700 or more years that passed between the Hittites and Homer, the name shunted from Northwest Asia Minor to the hinterland of Ionia. “Asian” in this passage is the name of a sub-cartographic space, nowhere near a continent! I am an Asian Europeanist literary critic. If I go back impersonally, using the disciplinary training that has sharpened my look, in search of the adjective that identifies me, this peculiar landscape, the marshy meadows of Anatolia, is my earliest contact with that name: my “Asia,” a place I have never been.

I need not recapitulate the well-known history of the trajectory of the name “Asia” in Herodotus (484–420 BC), Strabo (64 BC–AD 23), Pliny (AD 23–79), Ptolemy (AD 127–45). Medieval Christianity almost swallows up the cartographic imagination: Orosius (fl. 414–17) to Hugo of St Victor (1096–1141). For the medieval Christian the name “Asia” conjures up the place where the border between the real and the imagined, between the profane and the sacred, trembles. Isidore of Seville (560–636), drawing on Pagan sources, gives us a gorgeous fantasmatic Asia.³ The extraordinary ancient maps produced in South, East and Southeast Asia do not of course have any sense of the name “Asia,” although the name “Jambudvipa” for India seemed to have been current in Japan early on.⁴

The Arabs, West Asians themselves, have a more scientific record. But they never used the name “Asia.” The prophet Muhammad is supposed to have said: “Seek knowledge even in China” – the name is *Sin* (alternatively *China*) – China being the limit of the Muslim imagination of space in the Christian seventh century. For Al Biruni (973–1048), Ibn Batuta (1304–77), and all those Arab travelers and geographers, India was “Hind.” The Polos (Marco 1254–1323; his father Niccolo and his uncle Maffeo) never used the name “Asia” either. For them “Cathay” remained an object of investigation and astonishment, the other as such, domesticated into trading partner, object of

conversion, preparing the ideological field for Mercator (1512–94) – object of colonialism, not “our Asia” at all. Why then should we train our imagination to allow “Asia” to emerge as a continent?

Alexander (356–323 BC) came to India in 324 BC, having defeated the Persians. He thought of Persia as Persia, a tough competitor, having rather little to do with Asia, a less real place. From Arrian’s (Flavius Arrianus AD 96–180) account, it seems that “India” was abundantly available to Alexander as a name. It did not share the vague spaciness of the name “Asia,” a container and signifier of the not-yet-known. The Indian emperor Asoka (268–232 BC) could think “India,” knew five Greek kings and composed some of his edicts in Greek and Aramaic. The more learned you are in ancient history, the more connections you discover. Andre Gunder Frank redid his world-systems theory with an Asian focus in a book wittily entitled *ReOrient*, which gives a whole world of such connections and cites many other scholars who provide further elaboration.⁵ But as is so often the case, even in the qualitative social sciences, this is a book of corrective knowledge from above. It is a revision of European worldhistory, not an accounting for the history of “Asia”-s present, which passes through genealogy, marking the possible moments when the contacts disappear from public memory and from the geographical imaginary. There is no continuous line from then to now.

In my schooldays, every Indian school child knew that through Asoka an intra-Asian connection was also established. We read in school about Fa-hsien (fl. 399–414) and Hsāen-tsang (602–64), fourth- and seventh-century travelers. In May 2001, when I traveled to a rural area in China, where I was repeatedly assured that no one had seen a non-Chinese foreigner, the bus driver related to “India” as the place where “the Chinese went to fetch Buddhism.” Yet, this historically strong connection in popular memory lingers as a lack of contemporary political information rather than as a sign thereof. I have never received a comparable response, personally or impersonally, in speech or in writing, from any Cultural Studies scholar, author, or colleague and/or friend. (Alternatively, a map in Gunder Frank’s book shows me that there was a direct trade connection between my hometown and this area of rural China between 1400 and 1800!)

Even at the time of Asoka and the Chinese travelers, these exchanges were not perceived as continental amities, but as establishing connections between far places. The effect was confined to a small section of the elite. Neither the elite nor the subaltern peoples of “Asia” participated in the *synoikismos* (living in a common home) of

this named space. Should we train our imagination to allow "Asia" to emerge as a continent?

In *Asia Before Europe*, Kirti Chaudhuri argues that "the identity and the totality of the 'excluded set,' Asia will hold over time only as long as the identity of the 'set of sets,' Europe, is intact... It is impossible to distinguish a continent from an island, a peninsula, or a large land mass."⁶

We react to such remarks generally as a critique of the colonial production of knowledge. Yet, from Asia Minor to Indonesia, the patterns of European colonization are so different that I believe any productive and generalized *cultural* reaction to this is uninteresting now. It is the many bilateral Eurocentrisms of academic knowledge-production, as Chaudhuri's own book demonstrates, that concern us.

There are no ingredients for unification for the regions that are opened up for a generalized cultural production of a revised continent-think. Chaudhuri's example is the Indian Ocean rim. Gunder Frank provides many others. But these are trade routes, breeding an exchange culture that disappears easily. What inclusive cultural matrix exists in the history of the present for producing a region-think here? As I will repeat at the end of this chapter, regional economic initiatives, that may seem unifying, do not provide a specifically cultural cement, but rather produce a global managerial culture that Robert Reich has called "secessionist."

Further, one of the most interesting things about the *Asia-Pacific* phenomenon – a real mega-regional identity with its own archaic-residual-dominant-emergent flows – is that it harbors a China and a Japan, that had no sustained European colonial experience and a historically and geographically differentiated diaspora. Anti-colonial culturalism does not provide a ground-level cultural cement in that initiative. And Sinocentric world-systems theories legitimize Eurocentrism by reversal.

The only cultural cement provided for such unified "anti-colonialist" continent-think is among recent metropolitan migrant communities. In so far as this supports resistance against dominant racial discrimination and against dissension among different immigrant communities, this is a good thing. But (a) at best, it would go beyond the geographic outlines of Asia (for immigrants come from all over the world); and (b) if this metropolitan global-think appropriated the cultural imperatives of the global South entirely, such resistance would lead to another version of the "colonial" problem in the production of knowledge.

The first people to have called themselves “Asian” were Roman colonists of the province of “Asia,” fully established 100 years before Christ’s birth. In its heyday it included the provinces of Bursa, Bahikesar, Izmir, Usak, Denizh, Manisa, all in what would now be Western Turkey. “Roman republican governors and capitalists exploited the new province with predatory rapacity... The glittering and extravagant society of the coastal cities, with their wealthy rhetors and sophists, contrasts with the traditional, rural-based society of the Anatolian interior” (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*). What else is new? Orhan Pamuk would ask.⁷

The Gothic invasions of the third century after Christ finished “Asia” off. Continental reference to Asia, tied to European continental self-reference, arose with capitalist territorial imperialisms after the fifteenth century. It does not seem that the metropolitan postcolonial “new empires” are up for violent overthrow soon. (Seems odd to be revising this sentence the day after the collapse of the World Trade Center towers in New York on September 11, 2001.) And since I am part of the biggest of them, I should like to turn to Asian-America in a moment.

Before I do so, however, let us remind ourselves that, whether in the global North or the global South, the search for an originary “Asia” for the ground of our identity leads to nothing. We are not looking for an Asia before Europe. We are looking at the claim to the word “Asia,” however historically unjustified. To search thus for an originary name is not a pathology. Yet it must at the same time be resisted. The desire is its own resistance. Today more than ever, “Asia” is uncritically regionalist, thinks “Asia” metonymically in terms of its own region, and sees as its other the “West,” meaning, increasingly, the United States. After the death of his wife Harinder Veriah, an ethnic Indian Malaysian, allegedly caused by too long a delay in life-saving medical procedure in a Hong Kong hospital, early in 2001, Martin Jacques called Hong Kong “a bi-racial society in which [only] Chinese and Caucasians are respected and accepted.”⁸ Newly arrived in Hong Kong, I could not join the Press Conference to protest Veriah’s death and say *j’accuse*, because I knew only too well that when we caste-Hindu Indians are in the majority, we do not necessarily behave differently. And yet to say that in the face of violence seemed inappropriate. I felt a coward in every way.

We cannot expect root-searching or anti-colonialism to activate a new continentalism, not pan – but pluralist – imaginary, cultural, not directly productive of the political, although at the end of politics. We must educate ourselves as educators to think this mode.

A preliminary conversation with the students from my class in Hong Kong, before the Spring semester of 2001 began, disclosed a desire for mediation and/or counter-discourse between *Chinese* literary and cultural theories and European poststructuralism, which was my announced topic. They cannot be faulted, they reflect a general trend in training. In March, the session called "Critical Acculturation" at the Comparative Literature Association at the University of Kuwait, at the other end of Asia, read as follows: "Papers on critical efforts/ models seeking mediation and/ or a counter-discourse between classical *Arabic* literary theories and structuralist/ post-structuralist Western theories are particularly welcome. The overarching aim of this section is to open a multi-dimensional perspective on critical theorization in the non-Western world."

With respect, I am obliged to say that the bilateralism of these aims gives me pause. It falls into that pattern: my country or region over against "the West." By implication, the entire "non-Western" world is one's own region. I am reminded of the failure of the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades because each member of the Group of 77 entered into bilateral agreements with the old Group of 7, a banal political analogue to Harinder's death.⁹

Our continent is plural. Europe named it progressively.¹⁰ Today we are divided into at least West Asia (the Arab world), East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, – and Southeast Asia unevenly divided, not only between its two directional components, but also, chiefly through the inter-nationality of Islam, with West Asia.¹¹ The claim to the name is unevenly divided, yet there is a regionalist claim. We must therefore attempt to think it as one continent in its plurality, rather than reduce it only to our own regional identity. A necessary impossibility, if you like. Or a perspective available only to the imagination, though not to the understanding, which *must* go by way of regional identity.

United States

By contrast, in the United States, there is a superficial and precarious multiculturalist solidarity. This is dependent upon regularized civil rights within the abstract structure of the United States polity. The battle for such regularization is certainly a worthy cause, but it relates to the US as a nation-state rather than the adjective Asian or African in a hyphenated cultural descriptive. The differences come clear in voting blocks at election time and erupt into violence when the New

Immigrants fight the old and vice versa. But even on festive multicultural occasions such as the recent presentation of *balagtasan*, "a traditional form of poetic debate made famous by Francisco Balagtas, a Filipino poet of the 1920's... [that] was performed... [in March 2001] at Cooper Union in the Filipino language Tagalog and translated into English before a general public," English was the national language by way of which "a multiracial audience of all ages laughed and applauded as two poets debated whether Filipino-Americans should retire here or in the Philippines."¹² This is one random example among millions, of course. Asian-America is not Asia. English is the cultural cement of Asian-America.

In my first chapter, I have commented on Said's and Rorty's faith in the American University. Within that utopian enclosure, "Asian-American" is being expanded from East- and Southeast Asia to include, specifically, South Asia. It is my belief that this is so because the general South Asian diaspora, securing itself after 1965, when Lyndon Johnson lifted the Asian quota, came in as upwardly class-mobile professionals. Writers from this influx have a more direct continuity with radical Brit. Lit, coming from the legacy of the production of the colonial subject, "English in everything but blood," as declared in Macaulay's famous "Minute on Indian Education" of 1842.¹³ We are anglo-clone yet Asian – we make a great alibi for affirmative action. Joining the Asian part of Asian-America allows caste-Hindus to enjoy victimage. Amitav Ghosh, a (South) Asian-American writer, has recently fictionalized this group as marked by "a huge indelible stain which has tainted all of us. We cannot destroy it without destroying ourselves."¹⁴ That "all of us" is a synecdochic definition that Ghosh offers with historical irony: part standing for the whole: the colonial middle class projecting itself as the whole region.

At the oral presentation of this piece in Hong Kong, my friend and colleague Fred Chiu made an impassioned statement of identity with India, especially invoking the poet Rabindranath Tagore. Such statements of solidarity go a long way toward undoing the kind of regionalism that probably led to the death of Harinder Veriah. They can connect with the sort of exoticized solidarity that is available in the everyday, the bus driver remembering India as the source of Buddhism or, in a working-class restaurant in Hong Kong, the voluble and inebriated guest lifting his joined palms in a *namaste* greeting when I answered his query in "Cantonese": "Yan-doy-yan": Indian.

But just as such everyday gestures of solidarity melt in the face of economic competition or military or political mobilization, so do gestures such as Chiu's remain discontinuous with or disconnected from his actual politics if not amended by his counterparts (such as myself) from the other place. Tagore was indeed altogether unusual in wanting to claim "Asia" – perhaps the world – rather than India as his home. We must honor that initiative, especially today, even as we notice its legitimation, by reversal, of a more competitive Pan-Asianism. But, because the vicissitudes of such initiatives did not allow the practical struggle, to destroy the mechanisms of class apartheid at home, to flourish, Tagore's admirable efforts eventually worked for its consolidation.¹⁵ Today the divide between the Bolpur (the railway station serving Tagore's university)-Suri-Rajnagar-Ranigram-Shahabad trajectory (to name only one of the many possible ones) and the Kolkata-leaning trajectory of the University itself is relatively inflexible below the (upper-middle) class line. It reminds me of Atlanta's status as a sun-belt metropolis, its lines to immediately adjacent rural North Georgia relatively feeble. What lies on the other side of the line is the largest sector of the potential electorate.

Yes, what lies above the line is the middle class and above, the synecdoche for the nation-state. What lies below is the largest sector of the electorate.

I am making the kind of point about my fellow South Asians that the great West Indian interventionist intellectual C. L. R. James made about his fellow West Indians – such as George Padmore and Frantz Fanon. Commenting on Fanon, James suggested that West Indians did so well in "politics abroad" because they suffered from an oppression not so savage as what "the Negro" suffered in the United States.¹⁶ From the point of view of Jean-Paul Sartre, the benevolent anti-imperialist imperialist, Fanon became identical with his desire for Africa, a French-African; for Said, Fanon is North African – almost West Asia (the Middle East, of course); for Bhabha, he represents national liberationist anti-nationalism – and the deep background is South Asia (read India). These are powerful intellectual interventions, for contextual reconstellations are certainly necessary. It is only when the historicity of the source is altogether neglected, when the metropolitan appropriates the local, that locationist cautions become important, as powerful as they are dangerous.

Such distinctions can be made among the underclass as well. In her sympathetic book *Voices From the Indenture*, Marina Carter reminds us of this with reference to the experiences of Indian migrants in the British

Empire: "The natural alienation which is a core feature of slave diasporas has not the same force in assessments of the indenture migrations."¹⁷

Martí and DuBois¹⁸

In order to study such differences, and in order to examine the claim to diaspora as a distinctive property that lies at the base of US Ethnic Studies as a disciplinary tendency, and in order persistently to wrench it away from becoming a study of comparative victimage, we must investigate its vision of a paradoxical postnationalist continuity, now operating in the new name of continentalism. We must insist that this is not to suggest that the so-called nation of origin, or indeed continent of origin, especially when claimed as such, is in itself a repository of any monolithic identity.

A few years ago, it seemed that metropolitan hyphenation – subordinating the nation of origin to citizenship in a metropolitan country – might foster a postnationalist, even post-continentalist, global intuition. Paradoxically, the lines of contact established by the Internet have created a fictive continuity which allows the nation of origin to become a cultural justification for the otherness of the relatively mobile ethnic.

I do not believe that US Ethnic Studies need go quite so far as to turn its metropolitan home into an other space. But it can construct an intellectual critique of unexamined academic/diasporic culturalism that works to support US manifest destiny as the last best hope of cultural rights for the world. It is certainly good to say – for citizens of diverse national origins – in the US we are united in Ethnic Studies, although at home we are at war. But that passive peace has no intellectual purchase.

To combat the desire for an origin in a name, I propose to deal with "Asia" as the instrument of an altered citation: an iteration. Indeed, the possibility of the desire for a singular origin is in its iterability.

José Martí (1853–95), the Cuban patriot, lived in New York from 1881 to 1895, and wrote an influential essay called "Our America." In his writings, he refers to "Spanish America, *his* America, ... [as] 'Our America' and ... Anglo-Saxon America, 'the Other America'."¹⁹ The title of my chapter is an altered citation – an iteration – of Martí's. Martí's essay has recently been reconfigured for Latino/a Cultural Studies, with strong connections to US West Coast Ethnic Studies, in an interesting book called *José Martí's "Our America"*.²⁰ This is how the

editors of the text reclaim or reterritorialize Martí: "Martí's US writing," the editors write, "belongs to that tradition of exilic representation which counterpoises the lived experience of being 'left alone' in the Anglo United States with the reconstructed collective memories of homelands which lie elsewhere." I myself do not believe Martí is quite so distant from Cuba when he writes from New York; "reconstructed collective memories" gives a sense of nostalgia, which, for me, is absent from Martí's feisty text, except as part of the decorum of a nineteenth-century style. I think part of this sentimentalization is precisely because the text is now being reconfigured for the "twentieth-century migration [that] has seen the reassertion of Our America's *cultural* claims to" the Other America.

Martí could still generalize a binary opposition. We Asian-Americans are citizens of Martí's "Other America."

(Strictly speaking, I am not an Asian-American, but rather a resident alien Indian citizen. It is worth mentioning that here because I belong to a peculiar regional formation that is now becoming extinct, as we saw in the last chapter.) I was born during the Second World War. In the estimation of my generation in India, the War was, to use an obsolete German adjective that Marx often uses: *zwieschlächtig*, the site of a conflict. The horror of the Holocaust was what made it *European*. It was a *world* war because for us – with our quarter of a million dead fighting for the Allies and the highest number of military honors won by any national group – and subsequently for a number of colonies – the War was a remote instrument for the end of specifically territorial imperialism. The end of the Second World War seemed to make it possible for the entire world to become "nothing but neighbors."²¹ I come from a generation for whom it seemed that the control of this could also be grasped by the new nation. This was the false promise of a (post)nationalist internationalism that accompanied the euphoria of Independence. That dream has long turned into a nightmare, the disingenuous metropolitan promise of a "level playing field."

Any narrativization of the restless limning of a world after the World War goes through many phases, large and small. Negotiated Independences redefined themselves as neo-colonialism from the West. Failure of decolonization at home and large-scale Eurocentric economic migration began to fix the new world's demographic outlines. Increased Asian migration to the United States after 1965 bifurcated the US community of East Asian origin in the most significant way.²² One may mark that as the beginning of the call for re-citing or

iterating Martí's title. Before that East, and to some extent Southeast, Asians were the only groups granted the sobriquet "Asian" by US fiat. Now the "Asian" is broken into old and new. With the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent events in Eastern and Central Europe, these outlines have become altogether unstable. It is in the attendant demographic chaos that South Asians have breached the frontiers of Asian-America. Indeed, the Hong Kong academic is also US multiculturalism's felicitous "Asian," precisely because of the Anglocentric legacy of British imperialism, and because resistance to decolonization/recolonization in Hong Kong presents itself as unique postcolonial predicament. A cultural studies labyrinth there....

I speak as a person from the very first waves of postcolonial migration. I came to the United States 46 years ago, when the virtualized demographic frontiers of the modern world were not yet set. A bit of anachronistic nationalism clings to me still. However common it may be among European nationals to retain a passport and remain no more than a permanent resident in the US, Asians and Africans emigrate to gain metropolitan citizenship. My small group, however, is in both worlds, deeply, without being quite of them. I believe that slight anomaly gives us a certain distance, which may be valuable.

I had written a version of these words first as an Indian living in the US, speaking to Swiss philanthropists.²³ In the present context, plotting the patterns of global change after the era of territorial colonialisms in general, I must take into account the possibility of an Asia-Pacific as a major phenomenon. This possibility seems still confined to economic connections, easily established in an era of information technology. As I have suggested, the recent phenomenon of Sinocentric world-systems theories, generally equating dominant economic systems with cultural formations, only apparently provides a broader base. The iteration of Martí would especially emphasize a social and cultural change in that theater. I will come back to it.

There is now a nascent academic subdiscipline called "Migration Studies." At its most theoretical edges we don't often stop to think of the difference between the cultural requirements of migration and allochthonic demographic patterns in the United States, and in the European Union, respectively. Those differences should also occupy us, especially in an old Crown colony, with that strong cultural resistance to "decolonization" I mention in the US context above, recoded in Hong Kong itself in many different ways, from academic cultural studies through middle-class stereotypes to patterns of street behavior. But I must get back to Martí, and Asia as the first half of a hyphenated

word, the second half of which is “American,” a nuanced difference from simply “the US context,” European in the dominant.

Martí could still generalize a binary opposition, from the Hispanic cultural matrix of the Euro-Latin American, although he was sympathetic to the presence of the First Nations. We Asian-Americans are citizens of Martí’s “Other America.” If we binarize some monolithic “Asia” as our Other, or indeed our Self – same difference – we rehearse the problems that I have been outlining so far.

In his essay “The Uncanny,” Freud had suggested that the familiar (home-ly – *heimlich*) becomes frightening (uncanny – *unheimlich* – literally un-home-ly) through the operation of repression.²⁴ I have little faith in using the foregone conclusions of amateur group psychoanalytic diagnoses as evidence for Cultural Studies. But “The Uncanny” is somewhat different because Freud is there stepping into our territory, trying to open up the space between a word and its (formal) antonym. (I say “formal” because Freud starts off from the point that the two words *heimlich* and *unheimlich* do not *mean* opposite things. They are formal, not semantic antonyms – and the motor of this discrepancy is repression.) Freud is presupposing an unmotivated process working in language to which he can only give a psychological name.²⁵ When native speakers (Freud’s patients among them) use these words, the psychological potential in the archiving of the language allows them to signal “repression,” unknowingly – via the history of the language.

Freud wrote this piece in 1919. Saussure’s lectures for *A Course in General Linguistics* were presumably given between 1907 and 1913. There is an affinity here – one assuming, the other theorizing – the play of impersonal “motivation” and the “arbitrary.”²⁶ The chief question begged or left unanswered is: “What are the rules of the arbitrary way in which meaning enters and inhabits words?”

By deciding to move from actual spatial or locationist reference for the word “Asia” to its use as a place-holder in the iteration of a citation, I have entered the terrain of that unanswered and unanswerable question that must be begged – assumed answered – before we can launch any serious investigation in Cultural Studies. With that proviso, I move to another sentence in the Freud text: “Something has to be added [*muss erst etwas hinzukommen*] to what is novel and unfamiliar in order to make it uncanny.”²⁷ It is the productive contradiction that splits our continent, bearing the mark of different histories, languages, and idioms “that come forth” each time that we try to add an “s” to the wish for a unified originary name.

Thus, I am not talking about “real” minds (inside) and I am not talking about “real” space (outside). Yet, I am not playing games either. I am writing about the risky ways in which the “real” is produced. This is the slippery terrain of responsible Cultural Studies.

My sustained argument for the last few years has been the heterogeneity and plurality of so-called homelands. Here I have signaled at the confusion at the origin of the name of a continent. I would like further to suggest that the final “s” that might differentiate “Our America” from “Our Asia-s” may be a sign that if our home-nations were acknowledged in their plurality by ourselves as Americans, however hyphenated, they would become a source of anxiety. (My model is Freud’s suggestion that the prefix “un” in the word “uncanny” is a sign of repression.) Unless we suppress the plurality of the many Asia-s as they relate trans-nationally, we Asian-Americans cannot qualify ourselves as “diaspora.” Yet the singular is singular by virtue of its plurality – each named region is its own different and singular Asia.²⁸

Here as in so much else, W. E. B. DuBois (1868–1963) can instruct us. If he began as an “African-American” wanting to be both African and American, in mid-career he moved to Pan-Africanism and differentiated among the various kinds of Black Europeans upon the African continent – Our Africas.

Today, speaking as an “Asian” rather than a New Yorker, I want to turn to W. E. B. DuBois to show how African-American continent-think was pluralized by him. It is interesting that the lesson has not stuck.

The importance of Africa for the African-American is no secret.²⁹ What I find in DuBois is a starting point from hyphenation in the United States, and a movement toward a pluralization of the African continent in terms of the diversified imperialist history of the nation-states and regions. Through his Pan-African experience, he was able to think “Africa” without necessarily confining it to the outlines of the named continent.³⁰ I have often remarked that the lineaments of the African-American predicament can teach other hyphenated groups the vicissitudes of a “postcoloniality” specific to the United States.³¹ It is possible that what I am seeing in DuBois is shared by others. Like many scholars outside of African-American Studies, I may be assigning the name “DuBois” to tendencies present in less prominent workers in the field of cultural politics.

With that proviso, I should like to comment on these two moments in DuBois: *The Souls of Black Folk* (1899–1901), DuBois’s famous early

work, is the prototype of the best vision of metropolitan Cultural Studies. It is an American book, an exceptionalist and individualist book. In his questioning of Booker T. Washington, his refusal of a "triumphant commercialism, and the ideals of material prosperity" as the African-American's only future, and patience and forbearance as his or her only present, DuBois was also against the grain. (I have declared solidarity with this position in chapter 1.) Yet the only ancestor that DuBois could claim at this point is "this common Fatherland" – the United States of America –, because he recognizes a "responsibility to the darker races of men whose future depends so largely on this American experiment, but especially a responsibility to this nation...."³² (In order to find a comparable statement from an African-American woman, we must go to the end of Tony Cade Bambara's short story "My Man Bovanne."³³)

DuBois acknowledges this responsibility because "the [matrilineal] shadow of a mighty Negro past" is unavailable to the children of slavery. Here, early in the century, Africa is no more than "Our Africa."

In a prescient essay called "The Negro Mind Reaches Out," written 25 years later, DuBois pluralizes Africa.³⁴

This text is particularly interesting because it is included in a watershed anthology, edited by Alain Locke, called *The New Negro*. The emergence of "the New Negro," the felicitous subject of the Harlem Renaissance of the twenties, has conjunctural similarities with the Asian-American intellectual backlash against the "model minority" image of the Chinese-American – recoded by the mainstream news media to combat the African-American conscientized by the Civil Rights movement and, to a lesser extent, the "Hispanic"-American conscientized by the events so carefully described in José Saldívar's *The Dialectics of Our America*.³⁵ The rejection of the model minority image produced the New Immigrant movement toward selective and hyphenated Pan-Asianism. I have made it clear that I predate this movement. DuBois was invited to contribute to Alain Locke's anthology as a member of a generation older than the New Negro.³⁶ I feel an affinity with his message from an earlier generation at a particular historical moment.

DuBois's shift from exceptionalism to egalitarianism is well-known. If, however, we look at the two texts without explicit reference to his intellectual life, what seems most striking is that, writing as a member of the metropolitan minority, DuBois is exceptionalist and individualist; whereas, writing as a member of a global colonial world looking forward to postcoloniality, DuBois is altogether aware that the production of the exceptionalist and individualist colonial subject creates a

class-division among the colonized; and that the colonizer often and paradoxically preferred the “primitive” rather than the “mimic man” he himself produced, preferring a synecdoche that reverses the one Amitav Ghosh laments. DuBois speaks of the differences in policy among the various European powers, or, as he puts it more picturesquely, the “shadows” of Portugal, Belgium, France, and England. Africa is seen as historically pluralized.

We cannot know if DuBois was aware that anti-colonialism would not necessarily lead to a pluralized continentalism. If so, he never put it down in published writing.

Asian-American Pedagogy

Over against these monumental considerations, I want to look at something fragile, of the moment, dependent on the classroom. From Martí and DuBois I want to turn to an unusual and fine example of US pedagogy, critical of a specific regionalism, an unexamined claim to “Asia” by East Asian-Americans. I take Leti Volpp, who teaches at the Washington College of Law, as my example, as she describes a course that is “an internal critique aimed at those teaching Asian American jurisprudence.” She is describing her own teaching, intending

to challenge the often unrecognized dominant paradigms that serve to shape what is understood as “Asian American” or “Asian Pacific American.” ... Legal scholarship in many ways is lagging behind interventions made by others writing under the rubric of Asian American studies... [There] is [a] sad lack of legal scholarship on Asian American communities beyond Chinese and Japanese Americans. ... Some have referred to this [general phenomenon, the East Asian-American domination of the API rubric] as a form of racism.

What are [*sic*] missing are Filipino, SE Asian, Korean American, South Asian, Pacific Islander communities. What does it mean to teach a course about Asian Americans or Asian Pacific Americans but not include these experiences? ...

This is not just a question of responsible politics, it is also an intellectual matter, when we look at how the term discursively produces a category whose existence masks particular assumptions.

Volpp goes on to hit some of the stereotypes surrounding what is generally known as “‘Asian-American’” or “‘Asian Pacific American’”:

for example, "the model minority myth, the immigrant experience, the idea of perpetual foreignness, [the] eroticization of the submissiveness of Asian women."

[T]o what extent [are these stereotypes] true for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders? ... Their racialization has been primarily accomplished through the processes of colonization, dispossession, deracination, and through claims about the purported primitiveness of their cultures, [not through immigration].... What does it mean to use the rubric of "yellow" to presumptively represent Asian Americans? It signals that the speaker seeks to only represent East Asian American experiences, since those are the communities that have historically been labeled "yellow" in the system of ethnographic taxonomy, such as that invoked by the lower court in *Loving v. Virginia*, upholding that state's miscegenation laws – "God made the races white, black, yellow, malay, and red and put them on separate continents for a reason."³⁷

Centering Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander or Filipino/a experiences also opens up the question of the role of US colonialism in shaping racial formation....

Thus, I include course materials about the US colonization about Hawaii, the Philippines, US neocolonialism in Korea and Vietnam, and British colonialism in South Asia....

In the usual courses on Asian-American jurisprudence, it is straight men [who are centered]. The course is often constructed as about race, with gender and sexuality as distant add-ons. I try to set up the course so race, gender and sexuality are understood as mutually constitutive of one another.... In terms of centering gender, the course foregrounds the question of culture, incredibly important in Asian-American racialization, which is a site that is often about women. In terms of naturalization, I am researching now how gender and race intersected in denials of naturalization....

Are these courses spaces for Asian-American students to engage in identity politics/consciousness raising or for students to examine a site of academic inquiry? The ideal is mostly the latter....[I]t is important to differentiate identity politics from intellectual reasons to have a course like this.³⁸

I cannot overemphasize the importance of Volpp's distinction between identity politics and intellectual commitment, of her inclusion of questions of gender, cultural difference, and sexuality, especially in the context of an academic professional school (although I must point out the asymmetry of the inclusion of South Asia and the Raj – a history that has been laid to rest by the move to America – on her list). Such unusual interventions, however, must still remain

focused, by intention, on the US scene: the repercussions of the denial of naturalization. Within that focus, the continent of Asia can still only be seen, by implication, as the ground for (new) immigrant identity politics. The questioning of identitarianism is in the interest of claiming “Asia” for all who can claim to be *Asian-American*. West Asia is best left to Middle Eastern politics – inner Asia to post-Sovietology. There is not enough critical mass of Myanmar to Indonesian immigrants. Volpp’s excellent pedagogic plans depend on the historical demography of the United States. Within those outlines, this is the best example I have found. And this is a unifying, not a pluralizing initiative. “Our (American) Asia” is an effortful achievement. What it has to contend with is the fact that “incidents of sexual violence in the West are frequently thought to reflect the behavior of a few deviants – rather than as part of our culture. In contrast, incidents of violence in the Third World or immigrant communities are thought to characterize the cultures of entire nations.”³⁹

Efforts such as Volpp’s can still be contained within disciplinary sociology: as a move from identity to social relations. The importance of the effort is that it redefines education as a metropolitan social movement. But the matrix of this relocation and the “identity” of the players are provided and determined by the civil society of the United States.

We cannot ask Leti Volpp and other interventionist Asian-American critics to do more.

“Asian” Pedagogy: The Impossible Perspective

The production of a pluralized continentalism is dependent upon a responsible pedagogy in the humanities supplementing disciplinary sociology. Sociological connections, based upon conscientious research data, cannot by themselves address the problem of the desire for Asianism in Asians as something to unlearn and relearn imaginatively. Yet this task is daunting for the Humanities as well. Speaking, as I was in Hong Kong, as an Asian from one nation-state to Asians in another, in front of an Asian-majority multicultural audience typical of a modern university in Hong Kong, I must admit that the effort at supplementation seemed forbidding because there was no matrix, not even that of a common continent, if we considered space and history rather than name. (Next set of revisions waiting for my widow school-teacher to arrive for training, early morning in a “village” remote from

any sort of "road." The anchorlessness of "Asia" is perhaps felt best in subalternity. Last week, the same anchorlessness was evident in the tiny Chinese school at the end of a narrow hill track, run by a woman alone. Shall we dismiss these folks as pre-political when there is so much fantasy at the top?)

There is, of course, an awareness of the many areas of the world – including the many "Asia"-s – in Comparative Area Studies, in International Affairs, in Development Economics, and perhaps even in Comparative Asian History – although my imagination falters there. Because of these seemingly obvious disciplinary connections, the Social Sciences lay claim to a conciliatory role. As I have commented earlier, already in 1959, C. Wright Mills laid claim to the imagination – within strict US outlines – in his famous book. In 1996, in the full flush of globalization, the Gulbenkian Commission published its report on "the opening up of the Social Sciences."⁴⁰

But if we want to talk about a change that is more than institution-structural, a change that might affect the way the next generation thinks, we have to consider pedagogy in the Humanities. Here as elsewhere, I have a working hypothesis which brings us full circle to the beginning of the book; there below, here above: humanities pedagogy as such attempts an uncoercive rearrangement of desire through the method of its study. When we leave the general field of the Social Sciences and enter into the Humanities as such, we are speaking of a more textured kind of work, entering through friendship with the language(s), able to meditate upon gender and sexuality without the self-conscious arrogance of the gender-trained do-gooder. The real ground for examining and implementing this is of course in classroom and teacher training – language-based close-reading laced with social-scientific rigor.

In *Death of a Discipline*, I have attempted to give examples of such reading. But I have not been able to go as much in the direction of the social sciences as I would like – no doubt because of my own inadequate training.

I despair at the possibility of breaking through the insular specialism favored by many humanities departments in the best Asian institutions. At the same time, I cherish a hope that the best fruit of the new generation of (counter)globalizing intellectuals will foster something like what I am suggesting here on the pedagogic front: an enlightened generalism. This remains a goal in view of which a sort of transnational literacy, an intuition of the dynamic geopolitical configurations of the globalizing present, may be achieved, again and

again, providing a changeful and moving base for the recoding of the ceaseless movement of data as such.⁴¹

In the Humanities – by which I understand philosophy and literature – basic research is the exercise of the imagination. And it is through that exercise that a rearrangement of desires can, perhaps, begin to take place. There are no guarantees here. All other forms of research in the humanities borrow from other disciplines – law, history, anthropology, sociology, and the general craft of databasing. But the textured work specific to the Humanities must be distinguished from both comparativist expertise and the more localized dispelling of ignorance of internal conflict in each region, although that too is necessary. That is a different kind of savvy, not unimportant in its own place.

An article in *nytimes.com* described the detention of US-related academics in China in April–May, 2001 with a uniform US-focused reasoning, oblivious of the micrologies of internal power. The article spoke of Hong Kong as follows: “The detentions are casting a pall over Hong Kong’s universities, which have become a popular base in the last decade for scholars to study China. The former British colony offers a hard-to-beat combination of high salaries, proximity to the mainland and relative academic freedom.”⁴²

This description, based on ignorance of (or ignoring) internal power lines, offers us a text rich for interpretation. “Relative” to what, one wonders, as that adjective is applied to “academic freedom”? To the United States, one presumes. Additionally, it is possible to assume that Hong Kong, being a *former* British colony, now enjoys only *relative* academic freedom, full *academic* freedom being possible when the *state* is colonized or unfree. I am obliged to insist that a proliferation of specialisms continue to uphold the idea of an academy protected by a repressive state. As I have already remarked once or twice, Hong Kong is marked by a pervasive resistance to decolonization. I did not notice a “general” pall over the universities. There certainly was a contained effort at redress. The article also needed an adjective before the “scholar” who studies China thus, conveniently: “foreign,” read US. But we must also be able to imagine that the absence of this adjective, the unemphatic management of “relative” and “general” in the texture of the report, parallels our own metonymic appropriation of the proper name “Asia” only for our region. The denial of Hong Kong passports to those who are not ethnic Chinese, the denial of Pakistaniness to Yemenis, the denial of Indianness to Muslims, the exclusion of Kurds from the rights to the Turkish state, the withholding of inclusion into

statehood from Palestine, where shall we stop? The conflict in the Balkans is certainly comparable to this. But the latter is distinguished from our predicament by a desire for entry into European continent-think. If we lack the supportive matrix of the metropolitan nation-state, in other words if we are not *Asian-Americans*, we are also without the potential ideal of a united continent.

In *Anil's Ghost*, the Asian-Canadian novelist Michael Ondaatje attempts to imagine the difference between location and diaspora.⁴³ Sarath, an archaeologist, lives in the contradiction that the patient aesthetics of his profession must continue even as, as an activist intellectual, he must engage with the violence all around him, and his archaeological skills must operate in that arena as well. Anil, a diasporic Sri Lankan woman holding a British passport, travels to Sri Lanka as a forensic anthropologist for a human rights investigation, and is anxious only for the uncontradictory truth. Anil is the central character of the novel and is portrayed with exquisite sympathy. It is Sarath who is somewhat uncouth, with hints of dubious political connections. Yet at book's end it is Sarath who is tortured and killed, helping Anil presumably to escape, outside of the book's frame.

A training in literary reading teaches us to learn from the singular and the unverifiable. This little vignette from Ondaatje is thus not the general social truth about all located workers and all diasporic human rights activists. To think so is to refuse the invitation to work together with the social sciences, that can produce useful generalizations – however limited – that is one of the main concerns of this closing chapter.

Having said this, let us note that it is in the context of this division, in an indirect free style that signifies Sarath thinking, that Ondaatje gives a description of the foreign press and Asia: "Sarath had seen truth broken into suitable pieces and used by the foreign press alongside irrelevant photographs. A flippant gesture toward Asia that might lead, as a result of this information, to new vengeance and slaughter."

And, even if it can teach us something about the press and the mediatic production of "truth," the novel is still caught between Asian-America and Asia, the diasporic and the located. It does not escape the exclusionary Asian politics that I have commented on above. Qadri Ismail suggests that:

Since its cardinal actants are all Sinhala and Buddhist, since it minoritizes the Tamils by denying them effective voice in a story explicitly set in Sri Lanka, since it cannot even name its Tamil actants, since it denies therefore the multi-ethnicity of Sri Lanka, since it presents the

JVP [*janatha vimukti peramuna*] sympathetically but not the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam], since it depicts the state's brutalities in the south and not the north, since the only Lankan history it presents is Sinhala history, *Anil's Ghost* is clearly on the side of ... Sinhala nationalism.⁴⁴

Thus, although literary reading can teach us political lessons, we cannot assume this without a more widespread habit of politically literate textured reading, which is dependent upon training.⁴⁵ It is because I feel that we must *learn* to read texturally even as we produce generalizable knowledge that I call yet again for at least a relaxing of the academic subdivision of labor, not only between Sociology and the Humanities, between History and Cultural Studies, but also between the area specialties; at least a truce in the quarrel of the ancient and the modern, in the interest of an integrative pedagogy that still respects disciplinary difference. At courses I have team-taught with the social sciences, the greatest problem has always been to teach how to use literature as "evidence."

In one part of the academy – a part that is bigger than the whole – an area-integrative approach is the only game in town. I speak, of course, of the Business School. Here also specific regions and nation-states of Asia are connected selectively and the game theory exercises given to the students connect pretty directly to the "real world" outside the university. The extramural lines remain sectoral – governed by the ambits of groups such as ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), flanked by sub-regional groups such as SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), IORARC (Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation), BIMSTEC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand Economic Cooperation), BBNI (Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal and India quadrangle), and the like.⁴⁶ This area is so volatile that a layperson like myself can only report the day before yesterday's news, and ask questions. What kind of class- and gender-divided epistemic transformations will take place if the ASEAN dream – "the world's biggest free trade zone of nearly two billion people?" – comes true?⁴⁷ What new patterns of subalternization will emerge and how will metropolitan academic radicalism, including Asian-American radicalism, contribute to this? What does it matter that Megawati Sukarnoputri, an organic intellectual of this field ("Asean must remain open to the global economy," rather than allow some protection because China is notionally "nonmarket," she says), is a "third world

woman?" (I cannot forget that her father claimed that she was named "with/of clouds" – meghavati – because she was conceived on a cloudy day. Remember Norman Mailer's conviction that the man knew the day when a child was conceived?)

It is increasingly my sense that we must find some way of critically acknowledging the role of business schools in producing an integrating interface with the "real world," and not keep ourselves confined to magisterial Schools of International and Public Affairs. Corporate philanthropy leads to apparent material solutions to the problems of the disenfranchised, no doubt based on a general knowledge of problems on a pan-Asian basis. But it is a collection of gestures that does not lead to broad-based epistemic change in either the giver or the receiver. The connection may seem stronger than in Comparative Area Studies and the other Social Sciences that I mentioned before, where knowledge circulates in the academy and the contact is fieldwork. But in fact the connections are just as unmoored. It is the "aesthetic" that allows for an attempt at the bridging of the gap, always in a mode of uncertainty and anteriority. In the humanities, we can learn to try to "other ourselves," without guarantees. This can supplement the sympathetic identification and didactic leadership mode of the networking in global social movements which sometimes produces a Luddite legitimization by reversal of exploitative "Development" efforts.

There is a growing body of literature that focuses on the role of the CEO in today's world. I came across former Undersecretary of Commerce Jeffrey K. Garten's *The Mind of the CEO* the day after I gave a shorter version of this chapter as a speech in Hong Kong.⁴⁸ It strikes some notes that are common to these kinds of books. In brief, the points to mention are that, although the inevitable nod to "education" is made once or twice, the general tone is defensive, the general plan is "profits and communities," there are no details as we hear paeans to the loyalty of workers in this age of layoffs. The general theme is how to save old-fashioned capitalism in the post-Cold War world of Information Technology. Garten does not collapse economy and culture, as does Gunder Frank. He certainly insists on the unifying world system of the economy – "the Internet ... will create ... a 'new mental geography,' in which distance is eliminated and there is only one economy and one market – global in both cases" – but is quite aware of the cultural differential. This is what he writes as he discusses "communication ... under pressure ... when I was in charge of Lehman Brothers' investment banking activities in Asia ... [overseeing]

the restructuring of a gigantic near-bankrupt shipping company headquartered in Hong Kong: I was sure that some of my Asian colleagues were hearing the words but not really understanding them. This wasn't anyone's fault; the American, Japanese and Chinese experiences were just very different. I confess that I wished many times that the team was composed only of Americans like me." "Americans like me," not Asian-Americans. Ultimately, his recommendations in the book are profits plus community, a greater engagement of academic political philosophers (a disciplinary combination of social sciences and humanities), presumably to help make this happen, and, in one ominous sentence, a program that is the opposite of the imaginative othering of the self in which a robust Humanities education can train the imagination: "The mind of the CEO needs to get into the mind of his customers."

My call for integrative pedagogy must not be confused with these lines of trade and finance, haphazardly opposed by global social movements, although they signify a major arena of cultural transformation. These lines of transformation do not necessarily undo Martin Jacques's lament regarding "bi-racial [Asian] societ[ies] in which [only the ethnic majority] and Caucasians are respected and accepted." In fact, such lines of trade- and finance-related transformation, unanchored in the older disciplinary formations, can exacerbate what can perhaps be called "cultural feudalism," where a benevolent despot like Lee Kuan Yew can claim collectivity rather than individualism when expedient, and texts such as *Going With the (Cash) Flow: Taoism and the New Managerial Wisdom* proliferate, to rub shoulders with *If Aristotle Ran General Motors: The New Soul of Business*, to obliterate cultural difference superficially.⁴⁹ In the present state of the world, such lines may leave undisturbed classed cultural patterns of gender oppression, opposed by nothing stronger than the unexamined cultural golden-ageism of the middle- or upper-class activist – located, "international," or diasporic. Outside the circle of activism, it can produce a superficial "liberation" from Asian oppression in public behavior, temporary redefinition of protected space for diversified sexed behavior, with no epistemic or ethical change – no change, in other words, in deep mind set, and often no inclination for involvement in the struggle for the juridico-political redefinition of public and private space which remains little more than a facile imitation of Euro-US gendered political behavior unless opened up by the sort of disciplinary change I am imagining here. In the field of *sexual* practice, there is no trace of the sequentially stacked multiple modernities of which Shmuel Eisenstadt speaks so

eloquently, although his examples are culled from women's collective behavior in the field of *gender* struggle in the service of national politics,

Islam

Islam is a peculiarly Asian internationality that also embraces Africa, Europe, and, latterly, the United States. Thus, if we have mentioned disciplinary and geopolitical lines of thinking the plurality of "Asia"-s in the previous sections, in closing I mention a revised approach to Islam, not as a self-contained and monolithic exception, but as another historical entry into the plurality of "Asia"-s. This becomes altogether urgent in light of recent events – the demolition of the World Trade Center in New York and injury to a wing of the Pentagon in Washington on September 11, 2001; and George W. Bush's subsequent declaration of "war."

I am revising this by the light of a flickering oil lamp in a dark room in an Asian village where only the teacher knows Saddam Hussein and Iraq, vaguely. This is also true of the one-teacher school villages in China. Yet there are Muslims here, and there. Internationality is not necessarily geopolitical. Let us remember this as we read the rest.

I would like to start this section with a quotation from Charles Tilly:

Over the time that the world has known substantial states, ... empires have been the dominant and largest state form. ... Only now ... do we seem to be leaving the age of massive Eurasian empires that began in earnest across a band from the Mediterranean to East Asia almost four thousand years ago. To the extent that we regard such international compacts as the European Union, GATT, and NAFTA as embodying imperial designs, furthermore, even today's requiem may prove premature.⁵⁰

Today we are obliged to add US military-political imperialism, and plans of world governance, "good" imperialisms on the sustainability calculus. When I first wrote, the focus was on the postcoloniality announced by the breakup of the old Russian imperial formation, competing with the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, that managed to appropriate the dream of international socialism. The most interesting area of research in this new postcoloniality is neither that fantasmatic space "South Asia," nor that oneiric disciplinary enclave "*Asian-America*," but rather Central Asia.⁵¹ (In a larger perspective, the Balkans and the

Balkan diaspora would be of interest.) I have merely skirted this in the chapter on Armenia, and tried to suggest how the new postcoloniality is on the way to globalization.

The kind of integrative vision that I am suggesting would see Islam as a relief map with a diversified history, read Aquinas as a conservative respondent to the great twelfth-century secularist Abu'l Wahid Muhammad Ibn Rushd, known as Averroes by European mispronunciation. Indeed, this is the advice I gave when Ho Wai-Yip shared his brilliant study of the ethnic Muslim minority in Hong Kong: "Go integrative on Islam. Think not only of West and South Asian and North African Islam, but also of varieties of Chinese Islam, distinct in their diachrony and synchrony."⁵²

Attached to the area is the nearly millennial geopolitical narrative – Russia, France, and Britain playing for power there – of the Great Game. To comment on this play by historical play remains a rich field for an integrative Asianism backing up the tremendous impetus of US Ethnic Studies. How does the cultural politics of identity play in the Taliban's destruction of the Gandhari Buddhas? Can we attempt to understand them in terms of the unpublicized destruction of Native American and Pacific sacred places in the interest of "development"? Is the issue different because what is at stake is money – notoriously without identity – rather than "identity" as such, a culture of death against the iterability of being-human?⁵³ There have been some recent attempts at writing the area comfortably in the past in terms of the Silk Route from Samarkhand even as an anti-Soviet position re-coded religious fanatics as allies in the fifties, and the oil route re-coded the Taliban in a different frame day-to-day.⁵⁴ Such recodings have taken on a minute-by-minute dynamic since the events in New York and Washington. What are the intellectual lines that inform the politics of RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan)? A study of a metonymic individual of this group would be a task indeed for the new initiative in the Humanities I am invoking here, something in between socio-politically informed literary reading of idiom and a culturally caught discourse of ethics. Here Volpp's rethinking of the relationship between multiculturalism and feminism can be useful. My model for such a metonymic approach remains Ranajit Guha's study of Philip Francis in *A Rule of Property for Bengal*.⁵⁵

I wish I were as young as my best students, with the time to learn a few languages. For this new approach will not necessarily find the best directions from the proliferating collections of post-Soviet feminist anthologies in translation. First because, like much earlier postcolonial

studies, they still follow the lines of empire and therefore Central Asia is likely to find a less than interesting place in the anthology, with little careful historical textualizing or tracing. And secondly, as I have already mentioned the Soviets had made women the vehicle of modernization in the area. Thus the division among women down the tradition-modernity line is one agenda for feminist integrative work as it gives Asia a place in the history of the present for a US-based Ethnic Studies.

Another fascinating area, not unconnected to the lines of a new articulation of feminist culture, is the "Islam"-ization of the area's Islam.

As Hamid Dabashi writes: "From the scattered memories of a sacred imagination that once congealed in the Arabia of the sixth (Christian) century, competing 'Islams' were invented by contending political forces dominant from Transoxiana to Spain."⁵⁶ The tribalities of Central Asia had paradoxically written a "freer," more eclectic Islam than the more publicized conflicts in the residues of medieval Islamic cosmopolitanism or the recent puritanism and orthodoxy of the Wahabis. Close as I am to Bangladesh, I am very aware of the paradoxical freedoms within peripheral Islams. In Central Asia we can tap the consequences of an earlier modernization of women, and a current traditionalization of Islam. As the bankers say: a huge untapped market. ... Farideh Heyat has written of this in the context of Azerbaijan.⁵⁷ In my discussion of Armenia in chapter 3, I remark on this change as it comes through the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific reports. Somini Sengupta drives the point home, reporting from Baghdad: "In an air-conditioned bedroom with pink everything on the walls, Yosor Ali al-Qatan, 15, stares longingly at a hip-hugging pair of pink pinstriped pants. The new Iraq, her mother warns her, is far too dangerous for a 15-year-old girl to be seen in such pants."⁵⁸

I have not touched upon the phenomenon of the Caribbean – a space of productive *synoikismos* between Asia, Africa, Europe. I quote my wise colleague Maryse Condé: "As long as the African, European, Indian and Asian elements are not merged, Caribbean identity will not flourish."⁵⁹ That peace must also be made if "Asia" is claimed across the disciplinary boundaries.

Conclusion

To sum up my proposal, then: I am imagining something like a pluralized Asian Comparative Literature – something in between socio-politically informed literary reading of idiom and a culturally caught

discourse of ethics – altogether broadly based and working against the obvious identitarian regional divides, ready to work with already existing resources in the Social Sciences. Resources of language teaching would have to go beyond the major European and local language, which are already in place. Such a literary approach to languages places the reader in the place of the reader perhaps implied by the writer in the language. This practice of othering ourselves into many Asia-s can also use the resources of what is by now pretty standard Euro-US literature teaching – close reading. My slender experience with tertiary students and colleagues indicates that the great universities in the PRC teach literature much the same way. At less prestigious institutions there may be a “modern is better” approach comparable to “traditional is better” or “pomo/poco is better” in the Euro-US.⁶⁰ We are looking here at problematizing an established approach just as strongly as the identitarianism that has been a largely unintended consequence of *Orientalism* and postcolonial criticism.

In philosophy, on the other hand, the effort will have to be more thorough. The gains of analytic philosophy and pragmatism should obviously be retained (and indeed will be, since it is still the Euro-US dominant). Pragmatism’s effort to sanitize and claim a humanist post-structuralism is, however, too close to the declaration of “white mythology” as the human norm to be fostered as an unquestioned good to be seriously reconstructive.⁶¹ The insights of post-Hegelian (European) “continental” philosophy – for requirements of time and space I can comment neither on the connections between the concerns of this chapter and this widely accepted nomenclature, nor on the hierarchy implicit in European “philosophy” versus Asian “values” – need to be unmoored not from their intellectual complexity but from their attendant disciplinary hermeticism. Identitarian culturally marked “Asian” philosophies should be freed from similar separatist hermeticism and/or conservative regionalist isolationism as well as elite diasporic golden-ageism. All of this without dilution into what Jean Franco might call the “light” Cultural Studies approach.⁶² And the entire effort – literature and philosophy combined – should be held in the principles signaled by Leti Volpp in her consideration of multiculturalism and feminism.

I am speaking of an effort that must be renewed again and again, with no guarantees, in the name of Asia-s pluralized, where the naming names no real space, but rather names the critical position that re-cites Martí, puts both diasporic hegemony and regionalist unilateralism with the Euro-US under erasure.

Let the Asian universities also become utopias – but not on the US model. Rather than supply the dominant demand for restricted multiculturalism by only focusing on our own region, let us think of a more than merely economically diversified Pan-Asianism, a more than merely “comparative Asianism.” Gunder Frank cites Joseph Fletcher describing “integrative history” as follows: “First one searches for historical parallelisms ... then one determines if they are causally interrelated.”⁶³ If the Humanities and Social Sciences supplement each other, interrupt each other productively, then the production of knowledge will not be such a “been there, done that” game. A merely social scientific “frame resonance” – structure – will give way again and again to the attempt to strike a “musical resonance” – texture – and “failure” will be recoded as persistent critique in view of a success always “to come.”⁶⁴ Of course there are vested interests that will oppose this mightily, kill us with kindness and no funds in a corporatizing trend in universities, but we either do it or we don’t. I’m sorry for this lame conclusion on behalf of an impossible project that remains necessary, but I cannot find a rousing one. At any rate, an ongoing project at least assures us that the schools do not close.

Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Georgia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, the Koreas, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Macau, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Paracel Islands, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spratly Islands, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam. Asia. Diversified subject-positions produced by shifting geopolitical lineaments. So far just a list off the Internet, with quotation marks around at least Cyprus, Russia, Turkey – and such absent named contested spaces as East Timor. “Asia” drags the aura of its name – Melanesia, Micronesia – into Australia’s sphere of influence. Is Australia in the Asia-Pacific? A labyrinth of investigation there....

After my oral presentation of a shorter version of this essay, Jeremy Tamblin remarked that the incantation of the names of the various nation-states of Asia was reminiscent of Yeats’s “Easter, 1916”:

I write it out in a verse –
Macdonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse

Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
And changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.⁶⁵

Yeats is writing in the mode of tragedy – “a terrible beauty.” My mode is of the workaday world, people “[c]oming with vivid faces/ From counter or desk” Yeats writes in the name of nationalism opening out to exilic regionalism – “wherever green is worn.” I write to cite and pluralize the name of a continent. Yeats leaves out Constance Markievicz in his naming, having dismissed her as a “shrill argument[ative person] of ignorant goodwill” earlier in the poem. The woman’s part holds everything in my proposal. Some may say I am myself shrill with ignorant goodwill.

Yet it is an honor to have unwittingly borrowed a gesture from so deft a practitioner of the English language. May that power radiate in our efforts to inscribe our multiple Asia-s, again and again, in all our work.

And now for the rest of the world, the spirit of Bandung recoded from postcoloniality to globalization. Kwame Anthony Appiah’s important book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* is just out. I will submit my manuscript before I get a chance to read it. I read a selection and, based on that chapter, I would heartily agree with him that contamination rather than authenticity is what we must prize.⁶⁶ I must however suggest that there is a difference between the chosen Europeanist cosmopolitanism of the global elite and the passive exposure to multinationality in the everyday of the global underclass. However much they seem to “choose” and celebrate this by-product of capitalist globalization, they cannot be said to be the agents of it. My critique of cosmopolitanism cannot begin here. Let me point at another item of agreement between Appiah and myself and propose a solution.

“Take another look at that Unesco Convention,” Appiah writes. “It affirms the ‘principle of equal dignity of and respect for all cultures’ (What, all cultures – including those of the K.K.K. and the Taliban?)” I too have no faith in bureaucratic egalitarianism. Speaking in Cape Town right after the lifting of apartheid I had suggested, as I do in this book:

all rational formal freedoms ... can only be exercised by [their] own transgression, by being bound to content. We have experience of a society of largely unexercised guarantees, a society “just” by default. A robustly just society is where the members, when acting self-consciously within

rational and privative norms – never adequately possible – see freedoms not as ends but absolute means to protect their transgression, which is also their exercise. No justification of the *exercise* of [a] freedom can be drawn from within [itself]. It comes into being in its own binding.⁶⁷

Elsewhere I have situated the question of cultural rights.⁶⁸ My solution is to make it institutionally possible to learn as many of the world's languages as possible, which is rather different from both preserving cultural authenticity – “culture is its own irreducible counterexample,” “culture alive is always on the run” I have written, repeatedly – and imagining that the presence of people from different places all gradually acceding to the uniformity of globalization is actually affirming cosmopolitanism as a mindset.⁶⁹ I end my book on the promise of a conversation, on other Africas, on the way to the globe othered, again and again, from capital to social, through a pedagogy of genealogical deconstruction reterritorializing the abstractions of an anti-ethnicist regionalism.

Notes

Foreword

- 1 My thanks to Rosalind Morris and Henry Staten for reading the manuscript and suggesting changes. My thanks to Gyan Prakash for reading "Foucault and Najibullah" and suggesting changes. Gyan, here is a public apology for not returning the favor with your manuscript because times were bad. Send me the next one.
- 2 "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," *Diacritics* 15.4 (Winter 1985), pp. 73–93.
- 3 For the construction of a disciplinary Southeast Asia, see Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparison: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998).
- 4 Ninan Koshy, *The War on Terror: Reordering the World* (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2003), p. x.
- 5 When (and if) future generations look back upon the administration of the forty-third president of the United States, they might notice the play of chance in giving the US a role as "problem-solver," i.e. undoing the mistaken moves (West Asian policy) in a Great Game this book will discuss in detail, by using those chance events: the demolition of the World Trade Center towers on September 11, 2001, and the great Asian tsunami of 2004. One of the main arguments of this book is that the work of education is a responsible intervention into normality rather than solving problems from above. My earlier work examined that intervention into normality that entails training into consumerism. Yet even there, the concept of "enabling violation" in the production of the colonial subject that I invoke on page 9 recognized the role of education as intervention into normality. Now the work points

at the counter-intervention so that the class apartheid generated by the production of the colonial subject can be faced. I bring this up here because the Indian state's refusal of aid does not reflect an undoing of the class apartheid. This book will speak of reinventing a state that resembles the old dream of the welfare state accountable to the citizenry rather than the geopolitical state confronting global challenges.

- 6 "US at Critical Crossroads with India," communication from Ram Narayanan, May 6, 2006.
- 7 S. 3709, passed by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, awaiting floor vote as of August, 2006. For further developments as of April, 2007, see Somini Dasgupta, "India Debates Its Right to Nuclear Testing," *New York Times*, Apr. 21, 2007.
- 8 Sun Yat-sen, "Pan-Asianism," in *China and Japan: Natural Friends, Unnatural Enemies*, (Shanghai: China United Press 1941); Prasenjit Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism," *Journal of World History* 12.1 (2001), pp. 99–130.
- 9 For Shinpei Goto, see Emmanuel Todd, *After the Empire: the Breakdown of the American Order*, tr. C. Jon Delogu (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2003).
- 10 See Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006) and Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005). For a popularized account of the debate, see Gary J. Bass, "Are Democracies Really More Peaceful?" *New York Times*, Jan. 1, 2006, p. 18.
- 11 Raymond Williams, "Structures of Feeling," in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 128–35.
- 12 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, tr. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), p. 93; translation modified.
- 13 I was struck by this in Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial* (New York and Manchester, UK: Manchester Univ. Press, 2001).
- 14 This is not "privatization." English is not the only public language upon the earth, however convenient it may be to think so. Upon the relationship between the convenience of hegemonic languages and the "public" in languages without power, the text to consult is still Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind* (London: J. Currey; Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986).
- 15 Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha, 1994); hereafter cited in text as GG, with page references following.

- 16 "Empire, Union, Center, Satellite: The Place of Post-Colonial Theory in Slavic/Central and Eastern European/(Post-)Soviet Studies, a questionnaire." *Ulbundus: The Slavic Review of Columbia University* 7 (2003).
- 17 Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999), p. 388; hereafter cited in text as CPR, with page references following.
- 18 Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*, tr. John Charles Chasteen (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1996); Jean Franco, *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002).
- 19 Wu Hung, *Reinterpretation: A Decade of Experimental Chinese Art: 1990–2000* (Guangzhou: Guangdong Museum of Art, 2002).
- 20 "Postcolonial Literature and Theory," in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York: Scribner's, 2004).
- 21 This is now a received idea. Manuel Castells, *Rise of the Network Society* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 2000) argues the point passionately and with fascinating documentation.
- 22 Immanuel Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 672–3 and passim. In the translated pages, this word or its variants is variously translated "imputed," "responsible," and "accountability"! (Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, tr. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996, pp. 74–5). I believe the integrity of Kant's argument is destroyed by such translation practice.
- 23 In recent years, my analogies for scholarly practice seem to come more and more from old-style social movement activism. I believe this has something to do with the relationship between deconstruction and "setting-to-work," as I have outlined it in the appendix in CPR, pp. 423–31. Arindam Chakrabarti assures me that this is similar to a probative use of *vyavahāra* or "practice" in Indic rationalism.
- 24 Charles Lamb, *The Essays of Elia* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1939 [1800]).
- 25 Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, eds., *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* (New York: Rowman, 1999), p. 8. This book both gives us the problem and points at solutions.
- 26 Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 2004).
- 27 And it is in that spirit that I will open a dialogue with Meera Nanda, who has called me, in good faith, a prophet facing backward

(Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India*, New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2003; hereafter cited in text as PFB, with page references following). I am that, I think, though not only in the sense that she seems to suggest. ("Seems to" because I remain confused as to who her largely undocumented postmodernists might be.) I want to see a secularism that does not privatize the transcendental. (Neither mourning nor execution is possible without an intuition of the transcendental.) I do not just want to follow the European Enlightenment because, in its generalized form, it gives succor to the upwardly class-mobile colonial subject: "Science gave me good reasons to say a principled 'No!' to many of my inherited beliefs about God, nature, women, duties and rights, purity and pollution, social status, and my relationship with my fellow citizens" (PFB, xii), writes Nanda. I want rather to take my cue from the criticism of the Enlightenment from within the Enlightenment, and see how it can be used if turned around on its own terms. In answer to Nanda's judicious question "why intellectuals should work so hard just to say 'an impossible no' to the intellectual heritage of the West which, by their own admission, is indispensable to their own intellectual and political lives" (PFB 25), this is the answer I must give: I cannot think that what was good for me is good for the rest of the world. I inhabit the structures of the Enlightenment for reasons similar to the autobiographical ones Nanda provides. In order to make its good structures habitable by all, I must open the Enlightenment to what it was obliged to exclude, but not in an uncritical way. One cannot claim solidarity by acting out formulas. Otherwise, that excluded part is open to the kind of mobilization that both Nanda and I abhor. This will explain the dedication to my book. (Incidentally, it is reprehensible to suggest that I thought the Hindus gave sati-s [self-immolating widows] courage (PFB 151). I call the British abolition of sati "in itself admirable!" (CPR 290). My point was that neither side cared about the patient engagement with women's subjectivity and no one could recognize a woman's lonely resistance as resistance. There was no epistemic engagement with the women by Hindus or the British. Did Nanda really miss the fact that I excoriated the Hindus? The epistemic violation performed by the British was an enabling violation for people like Nanda and me. The inheritors of such enabling violation are described on the first page of the first essay.) Nanda thinks of it only as enablement.

Perhaps I should add a further word here about “epistemic violence.” On page 151 of her book, Nanda seems to think that I wanted the British to acknowledge the women’s courage by asking them to code sati with war and religious martyrdom. I should have spelled it out more. I think war is stupid and criminal and religious martyrdom at best misguided. The British reformed sati because it was an atrocity performed by an alien religion. Reforming sati was in fact as important as pacifism or secularism. That was my point. And, further, that the way to it should have been through engaging with women’s subjectivity, uncoercive rearranging of desire.

This morning a reader sent me another piece by Nanda where she faults me: “Indeed, scholar-activists sympathetic to the Hindu worldview, including Rajiv Malhotra and Koenard [sic] Elst routinely cite the writings of Ashis Nandy, Ronald Inden and even Gayatri Spivak as allies in a shared project of understanding India through Hindu categories.”

I checked Rajiv Malhotra on the Web. Out of 18 articles stretching from November 19, 2001 to November 18, 2004, I found only one reference to me, citing me as a fashionable deconstructivist corrupted by the West and ignorant of the Indian classics, certainly not an ally in Hindutva! As for Koenraad Elst, checking the index and bibliography of the eleven published books listed in the Columbia University library did not produce a single reference to Spivak.

Nanda is also critical of my support of “strategic essentialism” (PFB 156). I do not believe I should be on anyone’s compulsory reading list. If, however, I am going to be held responsible for something in a book published in 2003, then I feel it is imperative for the author of that book to have read the interview, first published in 1989, and subsequently collected in a book published in 1993, where I thoroughly repudiate the idea of “strategic essentialism”!

Nanda’s main objection to the postmodernists (and therefore subalternists?) is that they claim there is no “objective science” and therefore they lend support to the rightwing Hindu nationalists who espouse “Vedic” science – referring to the ancient Hindu scripture collectively called the “Vedas.” Her main source for this conviction seems to be the rather unscrupulous sting operation on *Social Text* undertaken by Alan Sokal some years ago. All that the Sokal experiment proved was that humanities folks could be

taken in by unscrupulous scientists, and that the referee pool of *Social Text* was not interdisciplinary enough. If we want “post-modern” scientists speaking undecidability, my uninformed suggestion would be to go to probability theory or particle physics, or to a text like Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*, already somewhat dated. I certainly do not remember ever suggesting “there is no objective science.” As for Derrida it is always possible he has said something of this sort in material I have not yet read, but I am well-acquainted with his general argument, and I would doubt it strongly.

- 28 Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, tr. M. Adil Salahi and Ahaur A. Shamis (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2001).
- 29 Sumit Sarkar is altogether more astute in “Postmodernism and the Writing of History,” in *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Relocating Modernism, Hindutva, History* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002). I would add a few suggestions. The tired judgment that Derrida “level[s] the generic distinction between literary and other uses of language” (p. 165) has been discarded even by the one who started it, Jürgen Habermas, whose earlier indictment on those grounds was notoriously based on secondary sources alone (Habermas, “Beyond a Temporalized Philosophy of Origins: Jacques Derrida’s Critique of Phonocentrism; Excursus on Leveling the Genre Distinction between Philosophy and Literature,” in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, tr. Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987, pp. 185–210). Habermas’s obituary statement for Derrida – “deconstruction is essentially praxis” (Habermas, “Ein letzter Gruß: Derridas klärende Wirkung,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, October 10, 2004 is not just a bit of pious fluff. Derrida is all about effort, all about setting to work, grafting the performative and constative together. Sarkar does not mention my work and indeed, it is not important enough to be included in a general critique confined to a single chapter. I must therefore speak up for myself, especially since both Meera Nanda (in a negative spirit) and Shrinivas Tilak (in a positive spirit) align me with Hindu nationalism. When Sarkar quotes with approbation Sarah Melzer’s and Leslie Rabine’s suggestion that “[f]eminists ... need to relate to the Enlightenment ... as ‘rebel daughters’” (p. 184), he might cast his glance at my old formula, instantiated in detail, of the “ab-use” of the Enlightenment, using it from below, wrenching it from its felicitous context. The anthropologist Joan Vincent found it interesting enough to have included the piece in

her collection *The Anthropology of Politics: A Reader in Ethnography, Theory, and Critique* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 452–9, specifically because of its consideration of the European Enlightenment.

- 30 At the “Conference on Autonomy and the Other: Conceptualization of the Israeli-Palestinian Question” (with Edward Said, Jean-François Lyotard, Israeli members of the Peace Now movement, and Palestinian intellectuals in exile), Rutgers University, November 28–9, 1984. Mattiyahu (Matti) Peled (1923–95) was a general, a professor, and a member of the Israeli kneset (parliament). Born in Haifa, his brief service as the military commander of Gaza, during and after the Sinai 1956 military operation, was a crucial turning point in his life. Direct contact with Palestinians led him to conclude, that for Jews and Arabs, who share the country, to reach mutual understanding, it is paramount to know each other’s language. Matti Peled decided to study Arabic. Peled was the first Israeli professor of Arabic literature who introduced studies of Palestinian literature into the academic curriculum. Toward the end of his life, he expressed disappointment with the Oslo Accords (adapted from <http://www.peledfoundation.com/Mattipeledeng.htm>).
- 31 I look at the recent work of my friend William A. Callahan, for example, and think how much my book would have gained if I had known that in discussions of civil society China is compared to the post-Communist societies of Eastern Europe (William A. Callahan, *Cultural Governance and Resistance in Pacific Asia*, New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 103–5); or if I could connect Nagorno-Karabakh with the Nanjing massacre, and draw out the lines of gendering in both (Callahan, “Theorizing the Nanjing Massacre: The Visual Politics of Chinese Nationalism and Sino-Japanese Relations,” work in progress).
- 32 Nigel Harris, *The End of the Third World: Newly Industrializing Countries and the Decline of an Ideology* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 7.
- 33 Paul Robeson, “Here’s My Story,” *Freedom*, New York, Apr. 1955.
- 34 Here a word to my dear friend Tim Brennan might not be out of place. Derrida wrote a great deal about tele-technology throughout the decades. Bernard Stiegler’s book *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews with Jacques Derrida* tr. Jennifer Bajorek, Cambridge: Polity, 2002) is among the many books that touch upon this. But a greater problem might be to call videography “orality” because it “represents sound” (Timothy Brennan, *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right*, New York:

Columbia Univ. Press, p. 129, 290n. 13). The entire early critique of phonocentrism was indeed focused on this sort of generalization. It was in this context that Derrida criticized Claude Lévi-Strauss's inevitably patronizing benevolence toward the oral culture of the Nambikwara by pointing out that the great genealogical memories of robust orality "writes" upon mnemonic material, which is why conventional writing seems as much a repetition as a rupture, a cyber-change as it were (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 107–18). I mention this because the subalterns in the entire Fourth World still have a hold on orality and class-mobile artists and archivists use videography and digital inscription to shift mnemonic writing to digital. Pedagogy marks the move in-between, a pedagogy I attempt to describe in "Righting Wrongs." I sympathize with Brennan. The desire for the oral is major. Indeed, in Derrida's staged failed mourning for his mother interrupting Bennington's Derrida, the very first words are "le vocable cru" – the believed in/raw vocable, voiceable, vowel (Geoffrey Bennington, *Jacques Derrida*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, p. 3).

Chapter 1 Righting Wrongs

- 1 George Shelton incidentally provides a gloss on the native English-speaker's take on the word "wrong" in *Morality and Sovereignty in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), pp. 128–9. See also D. D. Raphael, "Hobbes on Justice," in G. A. J. Rodgers and Alan Ryan, eds., *Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), pp. 164–5. Alex Callinicos gives other examples of social Darwinism in *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).
- 2 CPR 217 n. 33. This is a much-revised version of earlier work. The initial thinking and writing of the piece took place in 1982–3. In other words, I have been thinking of the access to the European Enlightenment through colonization as an enablement for twenty-odd years. I am so often stereotyped as a rejecter of the Enlightenment, most recently by Meera Nanda, that I feel obliged to make this clear at the outset. But I thought of this particular method of access to the Enlightenment as a violation as well. In 1992, I presented "Thinking Academic Freedom in Gendered Post-coloniality" in Cape Town, where I laid out the idea of

- 72 Mukundaram Chakrabarti, *Chandimangal*, ed. Sukumar Sen (Kolkata: Sahitya Akademi, 1986).
- 73 Williams, *Marxism*, p. 127.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 195–6. For a fuller list, see Somnath Mukhopadhyay, *Candi in Art and Iconography* (Delhi: Agam Kala, 1984), pp. 102–4. How would Derrida figure this economic use of *bodol* – qualitative exchange in barter – in his consideration of the Arabic original in Massignon (Derrida, “Hostipitality,” in *Acts of Religion*, pp. 356–420)?
- 75 See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ed., *Money and the Market in India 1100–1700* (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), for a sense of the turbulence of the scene.
- 76 Chaudhuri, *Asia Before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990).
- 77 Satyendranath Datta, “Amra,” in *Kabbo-Sanchayan* (Kolkata: M. C. Sarkar & Sons, n.d.), p. 32.
- 78 Roland Barthes, “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative,” in Stephen Heath, ed., *Image/Music/Text* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), p. 104.
- 79 Or indeed the parabolic impulse of the ten principal Upanisads, an altogether separate stream in the service of the *advaita* as such. Romila Thapar has connected this to the movement in India from lineage to state.
- 80 PIO (= Person of Indian Origin) is a category devised by the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India in 1999, for granting certain visa privileges.
- 81 See Sen, “Introduction,” *Chandimangal*, pp. 20–4.
- 82 Ibid. For the immediately contemporary situation vis-à-vis the global “rural,” see George Monbiot, “The African Gene,” *Guardian*, London, June 4, 1998, p. 22; and Bob Herbert, “At What Cost?” *New York Times*, June 7, 1998.
- 83 The phrase “willing suspension of disbelief” is from one of the great texts of English literary criticism that generations of disciplinary students of English are invited to internalize (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, New York: Dutton, 1960, pp. 168–9).
- 84 Derrida, “‘This Strange Institution Called Literature’,” in *Acts of Literature*, p. 49.
- 85 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p. 111.
- 86 Wordsworth does speak of producing good cultural *habits* in *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1992), p. 745.

- 87 One of the women interviewed is not even conventionally “decrepit.” I hope to comment on her extraordinary remarks about her chosen life in a more appropriate context.
- 88 I am thinking also of Sivani Chakravorty (1913–2003) who, a month before her death, in a shaking hand, cites in her journal a poem of Radha addressing Death as the image of her dark lover. What is it to cite in extremis? That, I have argued, is the essence of *bhakti*, divided-toward-the-other. Ms Chakravorty, institutionally educated in Bengali literature, quotes a modern version of the subaltern song, by Rabindranath Tagore; and she keeps her distance: “for me now it is as if dear Death you’re like my Shyam.” I have argued elsewhere that her generation of women was the implied reader of a significant section of Tagore’s fiction and poetry (Spivak, “Burden of English,” in Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, eds., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 137–8.
- 89 Jeffrey J. Kripal has read this act, and indeed Ramakrishna’s life as a *bhakta*, as *tantric* practice. For the former, see Kripal, *Kali’s Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 133–6. Unfortunately the book is so full of cultural and linguistic mistranslations that the general premise cannot be taken seriously.
- 90 I have not been able to grasp the simple poetry of the Bengali, where the abstract nouns are implied rather than stated.

Chapter 7 Our Asias

- 1 This piece was delivered to a Hong Kong audience. I have not altered the attendant enunciative pattern.
- 2 *Iliad* 2. 461.
- 3 See George Kimble, *Geography in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1938) and Natalin Lozovsky, “The Earth is Our Book”: *Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400–1000* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 53–5, 70–7, 80–3, 95, 105–9, 112, 134–7.
- 4 J. B. Hartley and David Woodward, eds., *Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1994).

- 5 Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998). The problem with arguments such as Frank's is that, in seeking to prove that there is nothing but world-systems continuity and that the argument from capitalism is Eurocentric, they throw the baby out with the bathwater. As enlightened Europeans, they want to give Asians back their history of economic dominance, implicitly underplaying the difference between culture and economy. In doing so, they emphasize commerce and credit and ignore the emergence of the working class. I am certainly against privileging organized labor as last instance. But all specificities of Asian (unorganized) labor, including its expansion into feminist economics, can only be played out over against that rational narrative. History is not just a repetition of cycles. Putting economy over against the state, as Jeffrey Garten can write: "However they [CEOs] behave, their influence will be at least as important as that of national governments and international institutions – probably more so" (*The Mind of the CEO*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, p. 7). Frank would simply admonish – it was always so. Our stake is with a future whose potential for change is in its undecidability, although, of course, there can be "no future without repetition."
- 6 Chaudhuri, *Asia Before Europe*, p. 23.
- 7 Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, tr. Maureen Freely (New York: Knopf, 2005) and Snow.
- 8 Martin Jacques, "Life and Death at the Bottom of the Race Pile," *South China Morning Post*, Tuesday, Mar. 6, 2001, p. 18.
- 9 Spivak, "Aesthetic Encounters," Keynote Address, Conference on Aesthetic Encounter, University of Kuwait, March 17, 2001. The pointblank refusal of the library at a reputable Hong Kong University to subscribe to the long-established and much-respected and consulted Indian journal *Economic and Political Weekly*, although the library possesses multivolume sets on Early Greek Philosophy and medieval Europe which I was often the first one to check out, is yet another example among many.
- 10 Aristotle already sets the stereotypes: "The nations inhabiting the cold places and those of Europe are full of spirit but somewhat deficient in intelligence and skill, so that they continue comparatively free, but lacking in political organization and capacity to rule their neighbors. The peoples of Asia on the other hand are intelligent and skillful in temperament, but lack spirit, so that they are in continuous subjection and slavery. But the Greek race

participates in both characters, ... for it is both spirited and intelligent; hence it continues to be free and to have very good political institutions, and to be capable of ruling all mankind if it attains constitutional unity" (*Politics*, tr. H. Rackham, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1932, pp. 197–9). Once Greece is recoded as the origin of Europe, we are on our way, establishing stereotypes that are legitimized and relegitimized by reversals and counter-reversals.

- 11 For these connections, especially with Yemen, see Engeng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2006). For the Indian Ocean rim, see of course Chaudhuri, *Asia Before Europe*.
- 12 Felicia R. Lee, "Filipino Rap Debates City Life, Pro and Con," *New York Times*, Sunday, Apr. 15, 2001, sec. 14, p. 1.
- 13 Macaulay, "Minute on Indian Education," p. 349.
- 14 Ghosh, *The Glass Palace* (New York: Random House, 2001), p. 446.
- 15 For a more detailed consideration see Spivak, "Deconstruction and Cultural Studies," pp. 14–43.
- 16 Unpublished lectures in the Shomburg Museum, New York.
- 17 Marina Carter, *Voices From Indenture* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 232.
- 18 I have coupled the two together to make a comparable though not identical point in the last chapter of *Death of a Discipline*.
- 19 Philip Foner, "Introduction," in Elinor Randall, tr., *On Art and Literature: Critical Essays by José Martí* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1982), p. 24.
- 20 Jeffrey Belnap and Raúl Fernández, "Introduction," *José Martí's "Our America"* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1998). The passage quoted below is from p. 6. The essays in the collection, especially those by Rosaura Sanchez and Donald Pease, redress the balance, pointing at the historical difference rather than effacing it by appropriation.
- 21 A reference to the general spirit of Hermann Levin Goldschmidt, *Frage des Mitmenschen und des Mitvolkes: 1951–1992* (Zurich: Nyffeler, 1992).
- 22 Colleen Lye, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature 1893–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- 23 Spivak, *Imperatives*, p. 2.
- 24 Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. 17, p. 245.
- 25 For Freud's disclaimers along these lines, see "Moses and Monotheism," *Standard Edition*, vol. 23, p. 27 n. 2, and p. 105.

- 26 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, tr. Roy Harris (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1986), pp. 67–9, 130–2.
- 27 Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. 17, p. 221.
- 28 This is not the contrast between totalism and pluralism that Schmuël Eisenstadt discusses. That discussion describes a competition in the field of knowing: “By totalistic I mean that there is in these movements the potential to claim that they have [the] only legitimate answer” (Eisenstadt, unpublished transcript of lecture delivered at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, n.d., p. 17). What I am pointing at is a contrast between the desire for the singular as a guarantee of my specificity on the one hand, and the recognition of the constitutive loss of the originary in the plural – a problem in the field of being: Who am I rather than What do I know? It should be mentioned that a certain pluralization of “Our America” beyond the binary is implicit in the disposition of Pablo Neruda’s *Canto General*, tr. Jack Schmitt (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1991); as in Pedro Mir, “Countersong to Walt Whitman,” in Jonathan Cohen and Donald D. Walsh, tr., *Countersong to Walt Whitman and Other Poems* (Washington, DC: Azul, 1993), pp. 47–99. Yet a unified predication of a “Latin” America over against the United States is geopolitically possible in a way inaccessible to Asia, for which an antonym is impossible to find.
- 29 Penny Marie von Eschen has provided documentation on African-American pan-Africanism in *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996). An important period text is Alain Locke, “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts,” in Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (New York: Atheneum, 1968 [1925]), pp. 254–67. Richard B. Moore signals others in “Africa-Conscious Harlem,” in John Henrik Clarke, ed., *Harlem, USA* (New York: Collier, 1971 [1964]), pp. 37–56.
- 30 For a discussion of the distinction between the Afro-Caribbean diaspora and Africa, see Spivak, “The Staging of Time in Maryse Condé’s *Heremakhonon*”.
- 31 Spivak, “Teaching for the Times,” in Anne McClintock et al., eds., *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota press, 1997), pp. 468–90.
- 32 W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Signet, 1995 [1903]); the passages quoted are from pp. 30 and 37.
- 33 Tony Cade Bambara, “My Man Bovanne,” in *Gorilla My Love* (Vintage: 1992 [1960]), pp. 1–10.

- 34 DuBois, "The Negro Mind Reaches Out," in Locke, ed., *The New Negro*, pp. 385–414.
- 35 José Saldívar, *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1991); see also Colleen Lye, *America's Asia*, and William Peterson, "Success Story: Japanese American Style," *New York Times Magazine*, Jan. 9, 1966, pp. 20–1, 33–43. "Success story of one minority group in US," *US News and World Report*, Dec. 29, 1966, pp. 73–7.
- 36 Robert Hayden, "Preface to the Atheneum Edition," in Locke, ed., *The New Negro*, p. xii.
- 37 *Loving v. Virginia* 388 US 1 (1967).
- 38 March 20, 2001, Columbia Law School, Asian American Jurisprudence Panel. This material is not for citation.
- 39 Leti Volpp, "Feminism Versus Multiculturalism," *Columbia Law Review* 101.5 (June 2001), pp. 186–7.
- 40 Immanuel Wallerstein et al., *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1996). It is a brave book, but altogether too abstract. The history is altogether European. The rationale is an encounter with Cultural Studies, feminism, multiculturalism. The description of these phenomena is vague and short (pp. 66–9). The spectrum of power is plotted between the United States and Africa. Asia is hardly mentioned. And structural change is by implication seen as isomorphic with epistemic change. It is interesting that the epigraph to chapter 3: "What Kind of Social Science Shall We Build Now?" is taken from that bible of the Third Way, Anthony Giddens's *Beyond Left and Right* (p. 70). For discussions of the report, see Amiya Bagchi, review, *Indian Economic Review* 32.1 (Jan.–June, 1997), pp. 117–18; and T. T. Sreekumar, "Reaping the Whirlwind?: Reflections on the Gulbenkian Commission Report," in *Review of Development and Change* 4.1 (Jan.–June, 1999), p. 154.
- 41 Kazuko Watanabe informs me of the consequence for UN feminism of the fact that "[i]ncluded in [the] membership [of the Financial Action Task Force, for example] are the G-7 [including Japan] and the European Union, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Switzerland, and Turkey." This has more to do with geopolitics than with feminism.
- 42 Mark Landler, "In Hong Kong, Scholars Keep Safe Distance from Trouble," *New York Times*, Apr. 22, 2001, late ed. final: Foreign Desk 11. I am grateful to Avi Matalon for bringing this to my attention.

- 43 Michael Ondaatje, *Anil's Ghost* (New York: Knopf, 2000). The quoted passage is on p. 156.
- 44 Qadri Ismail, "A Flippant Gesture Toward Sri Lanka: A Review of Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*," *Pravada* 6.9 (2000), p. 28.
- 45 See a comparable point about *A Room of One's Own* and the Gandhi–Irwin Pact in Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, pp. 32–54.
- 46 *Seminar* 487 (Mar. 2000) gives a good idea of India's connection to East and Southeast Asia for the lay reader.
- 47 "Progress is Made Toward Free Trade Pacts Linking Asian Regions," *New York Times*, Sept. 5, 2004, p. 15.
- 48 Garten, *Mind of the CEO*, pp. 223, 281, 68–9, 82, 181.
- 49 John P. Clarke, "Going with the (Cash) Flow: Taoism and the New Managerial Wisdom," first published *Britannica.com*, Dec. 4, 2000, in *Research on Anarchism*, July 27, 2002, http://melior.univ-montp3.fr/ra_forum/en/clark_j/taoism_managers.html; Tom Morris, *If Aristotle Ran General Motors* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997).
- 50 Charles Tilly, "How Empires End," in Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen, eds., *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: the Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires* (New York: Westview Press, 1997), p. 2.
- 51 See Frank, *ReOrient*, pp. 117–23 for a spirited case for the importance of Central Asia.
- 52 For a layperson's starting point on the historical and cultural diversity of Chinese Islam, see Dru C. Gladney, "Making Muslims in China: Education, Islamicization and Representation," in Gerard Postiglione, ed., *China's National Minority Education: Culture, State, Schooling and Development* (New York: Falmer Press, 1999), pp. 55–87.
- 53 Nothing can condone the use of living human beings to destroy symbols of destructive exploitation. I am a New Yorker, my heart breaks at the violation of my City's integrity. What I ask is a task for the imagination. Is it possible to imagine that much of the global South outside the upwardly mobile classes perceives the United States as an arrogant bully that does not think of others as quite human (whether objects of benevolence or malevolence) and this produces a dehumanizing effect?
- 54 See for example Francesco Bonami, "The Electronic Bottle: Dreaming of Global Art and Geographic Innocence," in *Trade Routes: History and Geography*, Second Johannesburg Biennale, 1997, Exhibition Catalogue, pp. 13–15. Francesco Bonami is the US editor of *Flash Art*.

- 55 Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Paris: Mouton, 1963).
- 56 Hamid Dabashi, *The Untimely Thoughts of 'Ayn Al-Qudat Al-Hamadhani* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), p. 109.
- 57 See n. 59, ch. 3.
- 58 Somini Sengupta, "For Iraqi Girls, Changing Land Narrows Lives," *New York Times*, June 27, 2004.
- 59 Maryse Condé, "Unheard Voice: Suzanne Césaire and the Construction of a Caribbean Identity," in Adele S. Newson and Linda Strong-Leek, eds., *Winds of Change: The Transforming Voices of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars* (New York: Peter Lange, 1998), p. 65. I have been privileged to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first Indian indentured labor on the island of Guadeloupe and have been able to write on this project of unity: "*Une expansion de l'âme*," unpublished keynote.
- 60 See my gentle criticism of Radha Hegde and Raka Shome on "power-study cultural studies is better" in "Postcolonial Scholarship: Of Productions and Directions," *Communications Theory* 12.3 (Aug. 2002), pp. 271–86.
- 61 See Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991) and *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991) for the most powerful example of this effort.
- 62 Jean Franco, "Indecent Exposure?: feminismo en la época del neoliberalismo," Keynote Address, Conference on Women and Literature, Bel Horizonte (Brazil), August 24, 2001.
- 63 Frank, *ReOrient*, p. 226.
- 64 "Frame Resonance" is a concept in contemporary sociology. I first encountered it in John Burdick, *Blessed Anástacia: Women, Race, and Popular Christianity in Brazil* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 9. I contrasted it to musical resonance, resonance in detail.
- 65 *Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1965).
- 66 Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Case for Contamination," *New York Times*, Jan. 1, 2006, from the Web.
- 67 Spivak, "Thinking Academic Freedom in Gendered Post-Coloniality," cited from Joan Vincent, ed., *The Anthropology of Politics*, p. 458. The passage quoted is specifically about academic freedom but applies upstream.
- 68 Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular."
- 69 The most accessible may be "Culture," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23.1–2, (Feb.–Apr. 2006), pp. 359–60.