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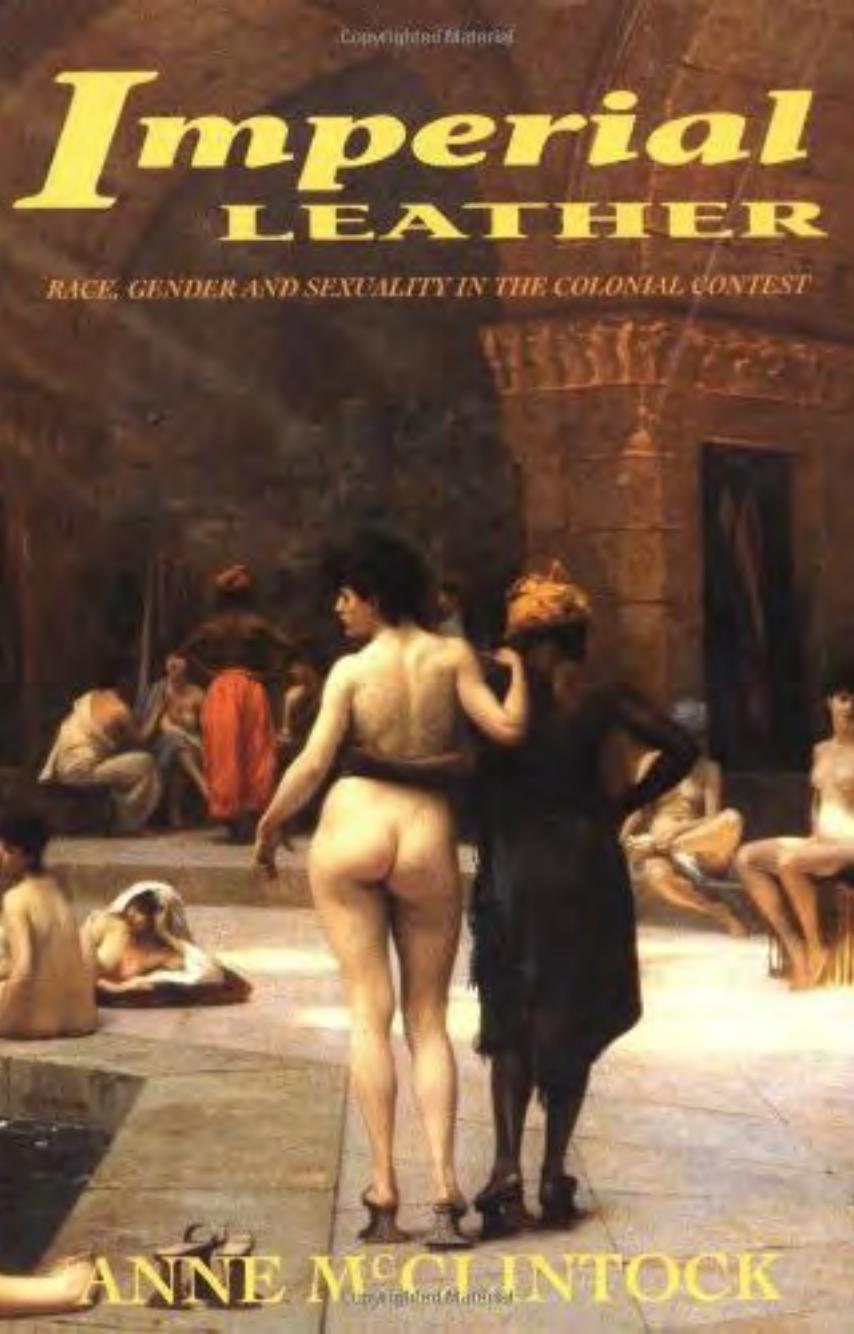
Imperial LEATHER

RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN THE COLONIAL CONTEST



ANNE McCLINTOCK

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RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN THE COLONIAL CONTEST

Anne McClintock

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INTRODUCTION

POSTCOLONIALISM AND THE ANGEL OF PROGRESS

There are many maps of one place, and many histories of one time.

—*Julie Fredrikse*

RACE, MONEY AND SEXUALITY

In the opening pages of Henry Rider Haggard's bestselling novel *King Solomon's Mines*, we discover a map. The map, we are told, is a copy of one that leads three white Englishmen to the diamond mines of Kukuanaland somewhere in southern Africa (Fig.A.1).[1] The original map was drawn in 1590 by a Portuguese trader, Jose da Silvestre, while he was dying of hunger on the "nipple" of a mountain named Sheba's Breasts. Traced on a remnant of yellow linen torn from his clothing and inscribed with a "cleft bone" in his own blood, da Silvestre's map promises to reveal the wealth of Solomon's treasure chamber, but carries with it the obligatory charge of first killing the black "witch-mother," Gagool.

In this way, Haggard's map assembles in miniature three of the governing themes of Western imperialism: the transmission of white, male

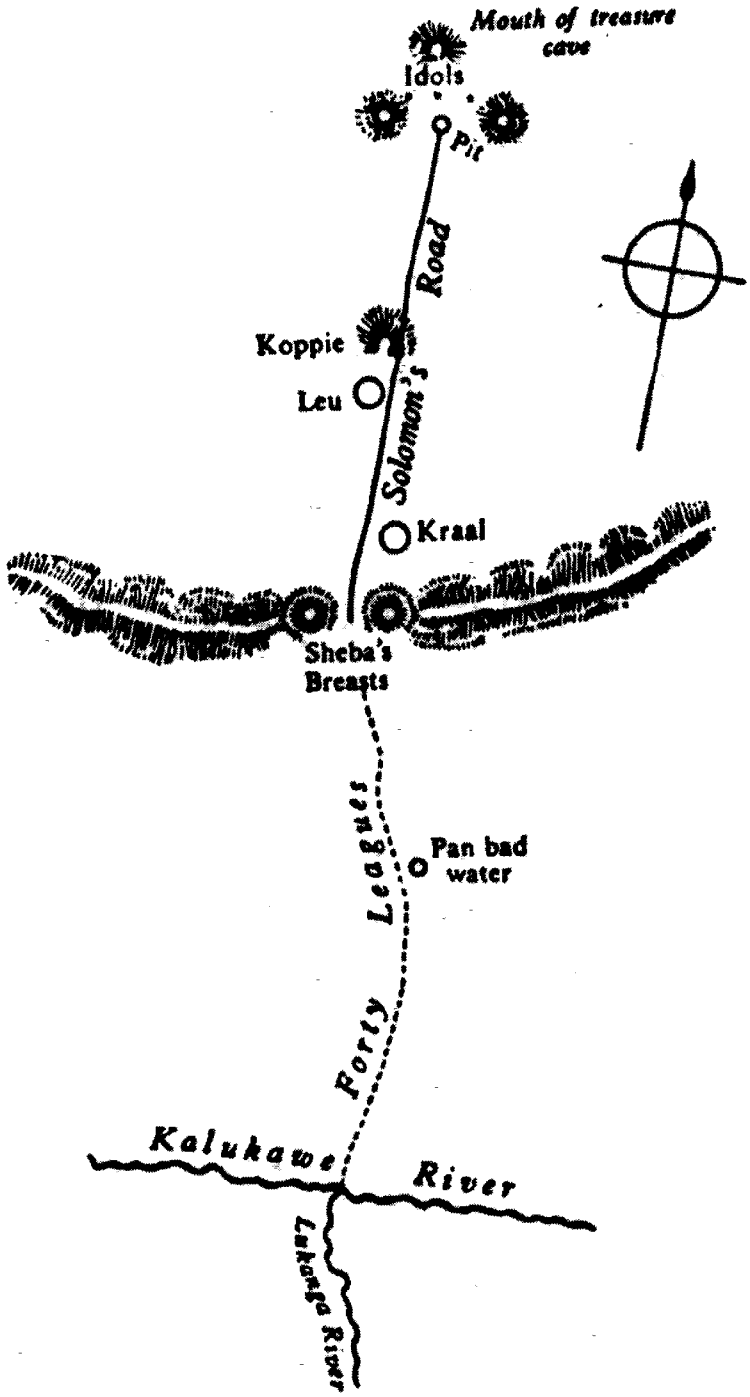


FIGURE A.1. THE LAY OF THE LAND.
Haggard's sketch map of the Route to King Solomon's Mines.

power through control of colonized women; the emergence of a new global order of cultural knowledge; and the imperial command of commodity capital—three of the circulating themes of this book.

What sets Haggard's map apart from the scores of treasure maps that emblazon colonial narratives is that his is explicitly sexualized. The land, which is also the female, is literally mapped in male body fluids, and da Silvestre's phallic cleft bone becomes the organ through which he bequeaths the patrimony of surplus capital to his white heirs, investing them with the authority and power befitting the keepers of sacred treasure. At the same time, male colonial inheritance takes place within a necessary exchange. Da Silvestre's demise on the bad (frozen) nipple is avenged and white patrilineal inheritance assured, only with the death of Gagool, the "Mother, old mother" and "evil genius of the land."[2] Haggard's map thereby hints at a hidden order underlying industrial modernity: the conquest of the sexual and labor power of colonized women.

The map also reveals a paradox. On the one hand, it is a rough sketch of the ground the white men must cross in order to secure the riches of the diamond mines. On the other hand, if the map is inverted, it reveals at once the diagram of a female body. The body is spread-eagled and truncated—the only parts drawn are those that denote female sexuality. In the narrative, the travelers cross the body from the south, beginning near the head, which is represented by the shrunken "pan bad water"—the mutilated syntax depicting the place of female intelligence and creativity as a site of degeneration. At the center of the map lie the two mountain peaks called Sheba's Breasts—from which mountain ranges stretch to either side as handless arms. The body's length is inscribed by the right royal way of Solomon's Road, leading from the threshold of the frozen breasts over the navel *koppie* straight as a die to the pubic mound. In the narrative, this mound is named the "Three Witches" and is figured by a triangle of three hills covered in "dark heather."[3] This dark triangle both points to and conceals the entrances to two forbidden passages: the "mouth of treasure cave"—the vaginal entrance into which the men are led by the black mother, Gagool—and, behind it, the anal pit from which the men will eventually crawl with the diamonds, in a male birthing ritual that leaves the black mother, Gagool, lying dead within.

On the map, the female genitalia are called the Three Witches. If the Three Witches signal the presence of alternative female powers and of alternative African notions of time and knowledge, these challenges to imperial power are denied by inversion and control. Haggard wards off the threat of a resistant female and African power, not only by violently dispensing with the powerful mother figure in the narrative but by placing alongside the Three Witches on the map the four points of the compass: the

icon of Western "reason," technical aggression and the male, militarized possession of the earth. The logo of the compass reproduces the spread-eagled figure of the woman as marked by the axes of global containment.

Clambering from the mine laden with gems the size of "pigeon eggs," the white Englishmen give birth to three orders—the male, *reproductive* order of patriarchal monogamy; the white *economic* order of mining capital; and the global, *political* order of empire. At the same time, both map and narrative reveal that these orders, far from being distinct, take intimate shape in relation to each other. In this way, the adventure of mining capital reinvents the white patriarch—in the specific class form of the English, upper-middle class gentleman—as the heir to imperial "Progress" at the head of the "Family of Man"—a family that admits no mother.

Haggard's map abstracts the female body as a geometry of sexuality held captive under the technology of imperial form. Yet it also reveals a curious *camera obscura*, for neither reading of the map is complete on its own, but each reveals the shadowy inversion beneath it of its other, repressed side. If one aligns oneself with the male authority of the printed page, the points of the colonial compass and the bloody labels, the map can be read and the treasure reached but the colonized woman will be stood on her head. If, on the other hand, one turns the male book upside down and sets the female body to rights, the crimson words on her body—indeed the male colonial venture as a whole—become incoherent. Yet neither version exists without the other. *Imperial Leather* sets out to explore this dangerous and contradictory liaison—between imperial and anti-imperial power; money and sexuality; violence and desire; labor and resistance.

GENDER, RACE AND CLASS
ARTICULATED CATEGORIES

> It was a while before we came to realize that our place was the very house of difference, rather than the security of any one particular difference.
>
> —*Audre Lorde*

I begin with Haggard's map because it offers a fantastic conflation of the themes of gender, race and class that are the circulating concerns of this book. *Imperial Leather* offers three related critiques. In many respects, the book is a sustained quarrel with the project of imperialism, the cult of domesticity and the invention of industrial progress. Haggard's map intrigues me, moreover, because it offers a miniature parable for one of the central tenets of this book. Throughout the chapters that follow, I argue

that race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like armatures of Lego. Rather, they come into existence *in and through* relation to each other—if in contradictory and conflictual ways. In this sense, gender, race and class can be called articulated categories. This, then, is the triangulated theme that animates the chapters that follow: the intimate relations between imperial power and resistance; money and sexuality; race and gender.

In Haggard's map, the diamond mines are simultaneously the place of female sexuality (gendered reproduction), the source of treasure (economic production) and the site of imperial contest (racial difference). Da Silvestre's phallic cleft bone is not only the tool of male insemination and patriarchal power but also the insignia of racial dispossession. Gender here, then, is not simply a question of sexuality but also a question of subdued labor and imperial plunder; race is not simply a question of skin color but also a question of labor power, cross-hatched by gender. Let me hasten to add that I do not mean to imply that these domains are reducible to, or identical with, each other; instead, they exist in intimate, reciprocal and contradictory relations.

A central claim of *Imperial Leather* is that imperialism is not something that happened elsewhere—a disagreeable fact of history external to Western identity. Rather, imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity. The invention of race in the urban metropoles, which I explore in more detail below, became central not only to the self-definition of the middle class but also to the policing of the "dangerous classes": the working class, the Irish, Jews, prostitutes, feminists, gays and lesbians, criminals, the militant crowd and so on. At the same time, the cult of domesticity was not simply a trivial and fleeting irrelevance, belonging properly in the private, "natural" realm of the family. Rather, I argue that the cult of domesticity was a crucial, if concealed, dimension of male as well as female identities—shifting and unstable as these were—and an indispensable element both of the industrial market and the imperial enterprise.

One might think it could go without saying by now that European men were the most direct agents of empire. Yet male theorists of imperialism and postcolonialism have seldom felt moved to explore the gendered dynamics of the subject.[4] Even though it was white men who manned the merchant ships and wielded the rifles of the colonial armies, white men who owned and oversaw the mines and slave plantations, white men who commanded the global flows of capital and rubber-stamped the laws of the imperial bureaucracies; even though it was white, European men who, by the close of the nineteenth century, owned and managed 85 percent of the earth's surface, the crucial but concealed relation between

gender and imperialism has, until very recently, been unacknowledged or shrugged off as a fait accompli of nature.

In the last decade a good deal of evidence has emerged to establish that women and men did not experience imperialism in the same way.[5] European imperialism was, from the outset, a violent encounter with preexisting hierarchies of power that took shape not as the unfolding of its own inner destiny but as untidy, opportunistic interference with other regimes of power. Such encounters in turn transformed the trajectories of imperialism itself. Within this long and conflictual engagement, the gendered dynamics of colonized cultures were contorted in such ways as to alter, in turn, the irregular shapes that imperialism took in various parts of the world.

Colonized women, before the intrusions of imperial rule, were invariably disadvantaged within their societies, in ways that gave the colonial reordering of their sexual and economic labor very different outcomes from those of colonized men. As the slaves, agricultural workers, houseservants, mothers, prostitutes and concubines of the far-flung colonies of Europe, colonized women had to negotiate not only the imbalances of their relations with their own men but also the baroque and violent array of hierarchical rules and restrictions that structured their new relations with imperial men and women.[6]

Colonial women were also ambiguously placed within this process. Barred from the corridors of formal power, they experienced the privileges and social contradictions of imperialism very differently from colonial men. Whether they were shipped out as convicts or conscripted into sexual and domestic servitude; whether they served discreetly at the elbow of power as colonial officers' wives, upholding the boundaries of empire and bearing its sons and daughters; whether they ran missionary schools or hospital wards in remote outposts or worked their husbands' shops and farms, colonial women made none of the direct economic or military decisions of empire and very few reaped its vast profits. Marital laws, property laws, land laws and the intractable violence of male decree bound them in gendered patterns of disadvantage and frustration. The vast, fissured architecture of imperialism was gendered throughout by the fact that it was white men who made and enforced laws and policies in their own interests. Nonetheless, the rationed privileges of race all too often put white women in positions of decided—if borrowed—power, not only over colonized women but also over colonized men. As such, white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting.[7]

I argue throughout this book that imperialism cannot be fully understood without a theory of gender power. Gender power was not the superficial patina of empire, an ephemeral gloss over the more decisive

mechanics of class or race. Rather, gender dynamics were, from the outset, fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise. In my view, however, gender was not the only—nor the dominant—dynamic of industrial imperialism. Since the late 1970s, an impassioned and compelling feminist critique has emerged—largely from women of color—that challenges certain Eurocentric feminists who claim to give voice to an essential womanhood (in universal conflict with an essential masculinity) and who privilege gender over all other conflicts.

Hazel Carby, for one, offered an early critique of white feminists who "write their herstory and call it the story of women but ignore our lives and deny their relation to us." That is the moment, she argues, "in which they are acting within the relations of racism and writing *his*tory."[8] In the United States, likewise, bell hooks has argued powerfully and influentially for the recognition of racial difference and diversity among women as well as for the politics of alliance.[9] In Britain, Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, amongst others, followed Carby in accusing white feminists of the "historical amnesia of white male historians, by ignoring the fundamental ways in which white women have benefitted from the oppression of Black people."[10]

I argue, moreover, that gender is not synonymous with women. As Joan Scott puts it: "To study women in isolation perpetuates the fiction that one sphere, the experience of one sex, has little or nothing to do with the other."[11] Unlike Catherine MacKinnon—for whom "sexuality is to feminism what work is to Marxism"—I argue that feminism is as much about class, race, work and money as it is about sex. Indeed, one of the most valuable and enabling moves of recent feminist theory has been its insistence on the separation of sexuality and gender and the recognition that gender is as much an issue of masculinity as it is of femininity. As Cora Kaplan argues, the focus on gender as the privileged category of analysis tends to "represent sexual difference as natural and fixed—a constant, transhistorical femininity in libidinized struggle with an equally 'given' universal masculinity."[12]

Michel Foucault argues that, in the nineteenth century, the idea of sexuality gave a fictitious unity to a host of "anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations and pleasures."[13] The fictitious unity of sexuality, he says, became a "causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a universal signifier and as a universal signified."[14] By privileging sexuality, however, as the invented principle of social unity, Foucault forgets how an elaborate analogy *between* race and gender became, as I argue in Chapter 1, an organizing trope for other social forms.

At the same time, I do not see race and ethnicity as synonymous with black or colonized. Indeed, the first part of this book is written in sympathy with bell hooks' wry challenge: "One change in direction that would be real

cool would be the production of a discourse on race that interrogates whiteness."[15] The invention of whiteness, here, is not the invisible norm but the problem to be investigated.[16]

I remain unconvinced, however, by arguments that race is a mere affect of floating signifiers as well as by claims that "there must be some essence which precedes and/or transcends the fact of objective conditions."[17] I am in agreement here with Paul Gilroy's cogent argument that "the polarization between essentialist and anti-essentialist theories of black identity has become unhelpful."[18] Exploring the historical instability of the discourse on race—embracing as it did in the nineteenth century not only colonized peoples but also the Irish, prostitutes, Jews and so on—by no means entails a spin into the vertigo of undecidability. To dispute the notion that race is a fixed and transcendent essence, unchanged through the ages, does not mean that "all talk of 'race' must cease," nor does it mean that the baroque inventions of racial difference had no tangible or terrible effects.[19] On the contrary, it is precisely the inventedness of historical hierarchies that renders attention to social power and violence so much more urgent.

Imperial Leather is thus situated where a number of discourses—feminism, Marxism and psychoanalysis, among them—merge, converge and diverge. An abiding concern of the book is to refuse the clinical separation of psychoanalysis and history. All too often, psychoanalysis has been relegated to the (conventionally universal) realm of private, domestic space, while politics and economics are relegated to the (conventionally historical) realm of the public market. I argue that the disciplinary quarantine of psychoanalysis from history was germane to imperial modernity itself. Instead of genuflecting to this separation and opting theoretically for one side or the other, I call for a renewed and transformed investigation into the disavowed relations between psychoanalysis and socio-economic history.

Imperial Leather attempts to rethink the circulation of notions that can be observed between the family, sexuality and fantasy (the traditional realm of psychoanalysis) and the categories of labor, money and market (the traditional realm of political and economic history). Perhaps it is fitting that such an investigation take place as a critique of imperial modernity, for it was precisely during the era of high imperialism that the disciplines of psychoanalysis and social history diverged.

Because I do not believe that imperialism was organized around a single issue, I wish to avoid privileging one category over the others as the organizing trope. Indeed, I spend some time questioning genesis narratives that orient power around a single, originary scene. On the other hand, I do not wish to be complicit in a commonplace, liberal pluralism that generously embraces diversity all the better to efface the imbalances in power that adjudicate difference. Certainly, one of the founding assumptions of this

book is that no social category exists in privileged isolation; each comes into being in social relation to other categories, if in uneven and contradictory ways. But power is seldom adjudicated evenly—different social situations are overdetermined for race, for gender, for class, or for each in turn. I believe, however, that it can be safely said that no social category should remain invisible with respect to an analysis of empire.

PITFALLS OF THE POSTCOLONIAL

Almost a century after the publication of *King Solomon's Mines*, in November 1992—the year of quincentennial triumph in the United States—a postcolonial exhibit called the Hybrid State opened on Broadway. To enter the Hybrid State exhibit, you enter The Passage. Instead of a gallery, you find a dark antechamber, where one white word invites you forward: COLONIALISM. To enter colonial space, you stoop through a low door, only to be closeted in another black space—a curatorial reminder, however fleeting, of Frantz Fanon: "The native is a being hemmed in."[20] But the way out of colonialism, it seems, is forward. A second white word, POSTCOLONIALISM, invites you through a slightly larger door into the next stage of history, after which you emerge, fully erect, into the brightly lit and noisy HYBRID STATE.

I am fascinated less by the exhibit itself, than by the paradox between the idea of history that shapes The Passage and the quite different idea of history that shapes the Hybrid State exhibit itself. The exhibit celebrates "parallel history":

> Parallel history points to the reality that there is no longer a mainstream view of American art culture, with several "other," lesser important cultures surrounding it. Rather there exists a parallel history which is now changing our understanding of our transcultural understanding.[21]

Yet the exhibit's commitment to "hybrid history"—multiple time—is contradicted by the linear logic of The Passage, "A Brief Route To Freedom," which, as it turns out, rehearses one of the most tenacious tropes of colonialism. In colonial discourse, as in The Passage, movement through space becomes analogous to movement through time. History becomes shaped around two opposing directions: the progress forward of humanity from slouching deprivation to erect, enlightened reason. The other movement presents the reverse: regression backward to what I call anachronistic space (a trope I discuss in more detail below) from white, male adulthood to a primordial, black degeneracy usually incarnated in

women. The Passage rehearses this temporal logic: progress through the ascending doors, from primitive prehistory, bereft of language and light, through the epic stages of colonialism, postcolonialism and enlightened hybridity. Leaving the exhibit, history is traversed backward. As in colonial discourse, the movement forward in space is backward in time: from erect, verbal consciousness and hybrid freedom—signified by the (not very free) white rabbit called "Free" that roams the exhibit—down through the historic stages of decreasing stature to the shambling, tongueless zone of the precolonial, from speech to silence, light to dark.

The paradox structuring the exhibit intrigues me, because it is a paradox, I suggest, that shapes the term postcolonialism. I am doubly interested in the term, because the almost ritualistic ubiquity of "post" words in current culture (postcolonialism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, post-cold war, post-Marxism, postapartheid, post-Soviet, post-Ford, postfeminism, postnational, posthistoric, even postcontemporary) signals, I believe, a widespread, epochal crisis in the idea of linear, historical progress.

Charles Baudelaire called the idea of progress and perfectibility "the grand idea of the twentieth century." In 1855, the year of the first imperial Paris exposition, Victor Hugo announced: "Progress is the footstep of God himself."[22] In many respects, this book is dedicated to challenging both the idea of progress and that of the Family of Man, and is written in sympathy with Walter Benjamin's injunction to "drive out any trace of 'development' from the image of history" and to overcome the "ideology of progress . . . in all its aspects."[23]

A good deal of postcolonial studies has set itself against the imperial idea of linear time. Yet the term postcolonial, like the exhibit, is haunted by the very figure of linear development that it sets out to dismantle. Metaphorically, the term postcolonialism marks history as a series of stages along an epochal road from "the precolonial," to "the colonial," to "the postcolonial"—an unbidden, if disavowed, commitment to linear time and the idea of development. If a theoretical tendency to envisage "Third World" literature as progressing from "protest literature" to "resistance literature" to "national literature" has been criticized for rehearsing the Enlightenment trope of sequential, linear progress, the term postcolonialism is questionable for the same reason. Metaphorically poised on the border between old and new, end and beginning, the term heralds the end of a world era but by invoking the very same trope of linear progress which animated that era.

If postcolonial *theory* has sought to challenge the grand march of Western historicism and its entourage of binaries (self-other, metropolis-colony, center-periphery, etc.), the *term* postcolonialism nonetheless reorients the globe once more around a single, binary opposition: colonial-postcolonial. Moreover, theory is thereby shifted from the binary axis of

power (colonizer-colonized—itself inadequately nuanced, as in the case of women) to the binary axis of *time*, an axis even less productive of political nuance because it does not distinguish between the beneficiaries of colonialism (the ex-colonizers) and the casualties of colonialism (the ex-colonized). The postcolonial scene occurs in an entranced suspension of history, as if the definitive historical events have preceded our time and are not now in the making. If the theory promises a decentering of history in hybridity, syncreticism, multidimensional time and so forth, the singularity of the term effects a recentering of global history around the single rubric of European time. Colonialism returns at the moment of its disappearance.

The prefix post-, moreover, reduces the cultures of peoples beyond colonialism to prepositional time. The term confers on colonialism the prestige of history proper; colonialism is the determining marker of history. Other cultures share only a chronological, prepositional relation to a Eurocentered epoch that is over (post-), or not yet begun (pre-). In other words, the world's multitudinous cultures are marked, not positively by what distinguishes them but by a subordinate, retrospective relation to linear, European time.

The term also signals a reluctance to surrender the privilege of seeing the world in terms of a singular and ahistorical abstraction. Rifling through the recent flurry of articles and books on postcolonialism, I am struck by how seldom the term is used to denote multiplicity. The following proliferate: "*the* postcolonial condition," "*the* postcolonial scene," "*the* postcolonial intellectual," "*the* emerging disciplinary space of postcolonialism," "postcoloniality," "*the* postcolonial situation," "postcolonial space," "*the* practice of postcoloniality," "postcolonial discourse," and that most tedious, generic hold-all: "*the* postcolonial Other." Sara Suleri, for one, confesses herself weary of being treated as an "Other-ness Machine."[24]

I am not convinced that one of the most important emerging areas of intellectual and political enquiry is best served by inscribing history as a single issue. Just as the singular category "Woman" has been discredited as a bogus universal for feminism, incapable of distinguishing between the varied histories and imbalances in power among women, so the singular category "postcolonial" may too readily license a panoptic tendency to view the globe through generic abstractions void of political nuance.[25] The arcing panorama of the horizon becomes thereby so expansive that international imbalances in power remain effectively blurred. Historically voided categories such as "the other," "the signifier," "the signified," "the subject," "the phallus," "the postcolonial," while having academic clout and professional marketability, run the risk of telescoping crucial geo-political distinctions into invisibility.

The authors of the recent book *The Empire Writes Back*, for example, defend the term "postcolonial literature" on three grounds: it "focuses on

that relationship which has provided the most important creative and psychological impetus in the writing"; it expresses the "rationale of the grouping in a common past" and it "hints at the vision of a more liberated and positive future."[26] Yet the inscription of history around a single "continuity of preoccupations" and "a common past," runs the risk of a fetishistic disavowal of crucial international distinctions that are barely understood and inadequately theorized. Moreover, the authors decide, idiosyncratically to say the least, that the term postcolonialism should not be understood as everything that has happened since European colonialism but rather everything that has happened from the very beginning of colonialism, which means turning back the clocks and unrolling the maps of postcolonialism to 1492 and earlier.[27] At a stroke, Henry James and Charles Brockden Brown, to name only two on their list, are awakened from their tête-à-tête with time and ushered into the postcolonial scene alongside more regular members such as Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'O and Salman Rushdie.

Most problematically, the historical rupture suggested by the prefix post- belies both the continuities and discontinuities of power that have shaped the legacies of the formal European and British colonial empires (not to mention the Islamic, Japanese, Chinese and other imperial powers). At the same time, political differences *between* cultures are subordinated to their temporal distance from European colonialism. Postcolonialism, however, like postmodernism, is unevenly developed globally. Argentina, formally independent of imperial Spain for over a century and a half, is not "postcolonial" in the same way as Hong Kong (destined not to be independent of Britain until 1997). Nor is Brazil postcolonial in the same way as Zimbabwe. Can most of the world's countries be said, in any meaningful or theoretically rigorous sense, to share a single common past, or a single common condition, called the postcolonial condition, or postcoloniality? The histories of African colonization are certainly, in part, the histories of the collisions among European and Arab empires and the myriad African lineage states and cultures. Can these countries now best be understood as shaped exclusively around the "common" experience of European colonization? Indeed, many contemporary African, Latin American, Caribbean and Asian cultures, while profoundly affected by colonization, are not necessarily primarily preoccupied with their erstwhile contact with European colonialism.

On the other hand, the term postcolonialism is, in many cases, prematurely celebratory. Ireland may, at a pinch, be postcolonial but for the inhabitants of British-occupied Northern Ireland, not to mention the Palestinian inhabitants of the Israeli Occupied Territories and the West Bank, there may be nothing "post" about colonialism at all. Is South Africa postcolonial? East Timor? Australia? Hawaii? Puerto Rico? By what fiat

of historical amnesia can the United States of America, in particular, qualify as postcolonial—a term that can only be a monumental affront to the Native American peoples currently opposing the confetti triumph of 1992? One can also ask whether the emergence of Fortress Europe in 1992 may not also signal the emergence of a new empire, as yet uncertain of its boundaries and global reach.

My misgivings, therefore, are not about the theoretical substance of postcolonial theory, much of which I greatly admire.[28] Rather, I question the orientation of the emerging discipline and its concomitant theories and curricula changes around a singular, monolithic term, used ahistorically and haunted by the nineteenth-century image of linear progress. Nor do I want to banish the term to some chilly, verbal gulag; there seems no reason why it should not be used judiciously in appropriate circumstances, in the context of other terms, if in a less grandiose and global role.

Most importantly, orienting theory around the temporal axis colonial-postcolonial makes it easier not to see and therefore harder to theorize, the *continuities* in international imbalances in imperial power. Since the 1940s, the U.S.' imperialism-without-colonies has taken a number of distinct forms (military, political, economic and cultural), some concealed, some half-concealed. The power of U.S. finance capital and huge multinational corporations to command the flows of capital, research, consumer goods and media information around the world can exert a coercive power as great as any colonial gunboat. It is precisely the greater subtlety, innovation and variety of these forms of imperialism that make the historical rupture implied by the term postcolonial especially unwarranted.

The term postcolonialism is prematurely celebratory and obfuscatory in more ways than one. While some countries may be postcolonial with respect to their erstwhile European masters, they may not be postcolonial with respect to their new colonizing neighbours. Yet neocolonialism is not simply a repeat performance of colonialism, nor is it a slightly more complicated, Hegelian merging of tradition and colonialism into some new, historic hybrid. More complex terms and analyses of alternative times, histories and causalities are required to deal with complexities that cannot be served under the single rubric of postcolonialism.

The term becomes especially unstable with respect to women. In a world where women do two-thirds of the world's work, earn 10 percent of the world's income and own less than 1 percent of the world's property, the promise of "postcolonialism" has been a history of hopes postponed. It has generally gone unremarked that the national bourgeoisies and kleptocracies that stepped into the shoes of postcolonial progress and industrial modernization have been overwhelmingly and violently male. As I explore in chapter 10 on gender and nationalism, no postcolonial state anywhere has granted

women and men equal access to the rights and resources of the nation state. Not only have the needs of postcolonial nations been largely identified with male conflicts, male aspirations and male interests, but the very representation of national power has rested on prior constructions of gender power.

The global militarization of masculinity and the feminization of poverty have ensured that women and men do not live postcoloniality in the same way, nor do they share the same singular postcolonial condition. The blame for women's continuing plight cannot be laid only at the door of colonialism or footnoted and forgotten as a passing neo-colonial dilemma. The continuing weight of male economic self-interest and the varied undertows of patriarchal Christianity, Confucianism and Islamic fundamentalism continue to legitimize women's barred access to the corridors of political and economic power, their persistent educational disadvantage, the domestic double workday, unequal childcare, gendered malnutrition, sexual violence, genital mutilation and domestic battery. The histories of these male policies, while deeply implicated in colonialism, are not reducible to colonialism and cannot be understood without distinct theories of gender power.

Edward Said has famously argued that the sexual subjection of Oriental women to Western men "fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled."[29] For Said, Orientalism takes perverse shape as a "male power-fantasy" that sexualizes a feminized Orient for Western power and possession. But sexuality comes close, here, to being no more than a metaphor for other, more important (that is, male) dynamics played out in what Said calls "an exclusively male province."[30] Sexuality as a trope for other power relations was certainly an abiding aspect of imperial power. The feminizing of the "virgin" land, as I explore in more detail below, operated as a metaphor for relations that were very often not about sexuality at all, or were only indirectly sexual. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has explored in important ways how the triangulations of male-female-male space often served to structure male homosocial relations.[31] But seeing sexuality only as a metaphor runs the risk of eliding *gender* as a constitutive dynamic of imperial and anti-imperial power. I make this point not to diminish the enormous importance and influence of Said's work on male imperial relations but rather to regret that he does not systematically explore the dynamics of gender as a critical aspect of the imperial project.

Bogus universals such as "the postcolonial woman," or "the postcolonial other" obscure relations not only between men and women but also among women. Relations between a French tourist and the Haitian woman who washes her bed linen are not the same as the relations between their husbands. Films like *Out of Africa*, clothing chains like *Banana Republic*

and perfumes like *Safari* peddle neocolonial nostalgia for an era when European women in brisk white shirts and safari green supposedly found freedom in empire: running coffee plantations, killing lions and zipping about the colonial skies in aeroplanes—a misbegotten commercialization of white women's "liberation" that has not made it any easier for women of color to form alliances with white women anywhere, let alone parry criticisms by male nationalists already hostile to feminism.

In my view, imperialism emerged as a contradictory and ambiguous project, shaped as much by tensions within metropolitan policy and conflicts within colonial administrations—at best, ad hoc and opportunistic affairs—as by the varied cultures and circumstances into which colonials intruded and the conflicting responses and resistances with which they were met. For this reason, I remain unconvinced that the sanctioned binaries—colonizer-colonized, self-other, dominance-resistance, metropolis-colony, colonial-postcolonial—are adequate to the task of accounting for, let alone strategically opposing, the tenacious legacies of imperialism. Drawn historically from the metaphysical Manicheanism of the imperial enlightenment itself, such binaries run the risk of simply inverting, rather than overturning, dominant notions of power. I am thus concerned with the overdeterminations of power, for, I believe, it is at the crossroads of contradictions that strategies for change may best be found.

Throughout this book, I am deeply interested in the myriad forms of both imperial and anti-imperial agency. I am less interested, however, in agency as a purely formal or philosophical question than I am in the host of difficult ways in which people's actions and desires are mediated through institutions of power: the family, the media, the law, armies, nationalist movements and so on. From the outset, people's experiences of desire and rage, memory and power, community and revolt are inflected and mediated by the institutions through which they find their meaning—and which they, in turn, transform. *Imperial Leather* is, for this reason, as deeply concerned with questions of violence and power as it is with questions of fantasy, desire and difference.

I wish to open notions of power and resistance to a more diverse politics of agency, involving the dense web of relations between coercion, negotiation, complicity, refusal, dissembling, mimicry, compromise, affiliation and revolt. Seeking only the fissures of formal ambivalence (hybridity, ambiguity, undecidability and so on) cannot, in my view, explain the rise to dominance of certain groups or cultures, nor the dereliction and obliteration of others. To ask how power succeeds or fails—despite its provisionality and despite its constitution in contradiction and ambiguity—involves investigating not only the tensions of conceptual form but also the torsions of social history.

I wish to emphasize from the outset, however, that I do not regard imperialism as an inherently British power that impelled itself outward from a European center to subjugate the peripheral territories of "the Other."[32] As I see it, imperial power emerged from a constellation of processes, taking haphazard shape from myriad encounters with alternative forms of authority, knowledge and power. I am thus deeply interested in what Gilroy calls "the processes of cultural mutation and restless (dis)continuity that exceed racial discourse and avoid capture by its agents."[33] Imperialism was a situation under constant contest, producing historical effects that were neither predetermined, uncontested nor ineradicable—in the context, it cannot be forgotten, of extreme imbalances of power.

It seems important to me, therefore, not to read the contradictions of colonial discourse as a matter of textuality alone. What Gayatri Spivak calls, in an apt phrase, "the planned epistemic violence of the imperialist project" was also, all too often, backed up by the planned institutional violence of armies and law courts, prisons and state machinery.[34] The power of guns, whips and shackles, while always implicated in discourse and representation, is not reducible to the "violence of the letter."[35] If colonial texts reveal fissures and contradictions, the colonials themselves all too often succeeded in settling matters of indecision with a violent excess of militarized masculinity. The chapters that follow are thus deeply concerned with the intimate—if often conflictual—relations between textual and institutional power.

In this book, I hope to do more than point out that different power groups—women and men, colonized and colonizers, middle and working class—occupied different positions in the global arena of imperialism. The story, as Scott puts it, is not simply "about the things that have happened to women and men and how they have related to them; instead it is about how the subjective and collective meanings of women and men as categories of identity have been constructed."[36] In other words, the story is not simply about relations between black and white people, men and women, but about how the categories of whiteness and blackness, masculinity and femininity, labor and class came historically into being in the first place.

In the first part of this book, I explore how Victorian metropolitan space became reordered as a space for the exhibition of imperial spectacle and the reinvention of race. In the process, I investigate a number of circulating themes: commodity racism and fetishism, the urban explorers, the emergence of photography and the imperial exhibitions, the cult of domesticity, the invention of the idea of the idle woman, the disavowal of women's work, cross-dressing and gender ambiguity, the invention of the idea of degeneration, panoptical time and anachronistic space.

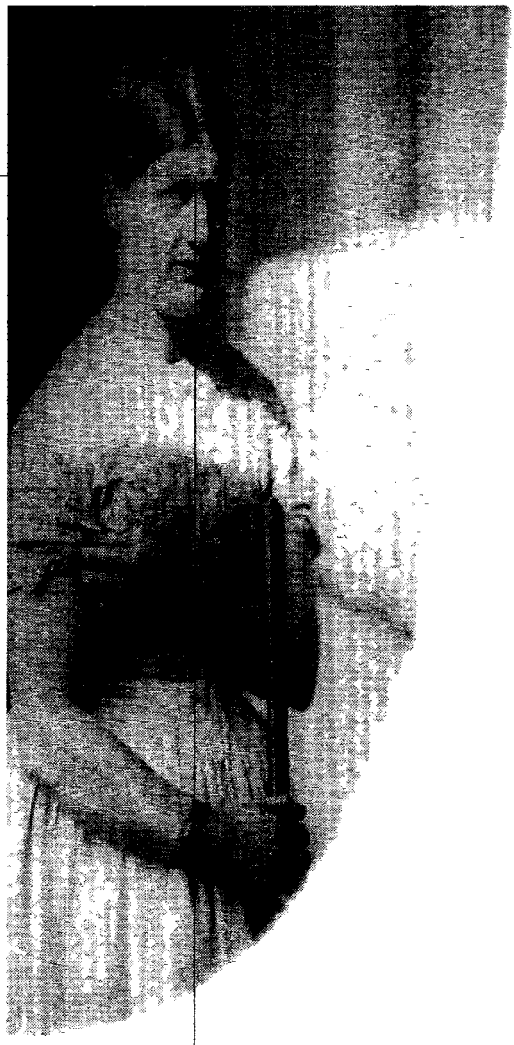
In the second part of the book, I explore how the colonies—in particular Africa—became a theater for exhibiting, amongst other things,

the cult of domesticity and the reinvention of patriarchy. Here, I explore some of the stalwart themes of colonial discourse: the feminizing of the land, the myth of the empty lands, the crisis of origins, domestic colonialism, the soap saga and the emergence of commodity fetishism, the reordering of land and labor, the invention of the idea of racial idleness—as well as the complex and myriad forms of resistance to these processes. By exploring the intricate filaments among imperialism, domesticity and money, I suggest that the mass-marketing of empire as a global system was intimately wedded to the Western reinvention of domesticity, so that imperialism cannot be understood without a theory of domestic space and its relation to the market. At the same time, the following chapters explore the beleaguered strategies of refusal, negotiation and transformation that were flung up in resistance to the imperial enterprise. In the last section of the book, in particular, I focus on the tumultuous events in South Africa, from the late 1940s until the current, bloodied contest over national power.

I have chosen, in this way, to tell a series of overlapping and contradictory stories—of black and white working-class women, of white middle-class men and women and of black working-class and middle-class men and women. The genres I address are diverse—photography, diaries, ethnographies, adventure novels, oral histories, performance poetry and the myriad forms of national culture. Amongst others, these cultural forms include the extraordinary diaries and photographs of Hannah Cullwick, a white Victorian maid-of-all-work and her secret marriage to the Victorian barrister and poet, Arthur Munby; the bestselling imperial fantasies by Rider Haggard; the imperial Exhibitions and photography; soap advertising; the political writing and novels of the feminist Olive Schreiner; the narrative of a South African domestic worker "Poppie Nongena"; black cultural politics in South Africa since the Soweto uprising; the writings of Frantz Fanon; and the varied, conflicting voices of Afrikaner and African nationalists in South Africa.

These narratives have many sources and do not promise the unearthing of a pristine past, in any event a utopian task. Rather, this book is an engagement—motivated, selective and oppositional—with both imperial and anti-imperial narratives of fathers and families, labor and gold, mothers and maids.

EMPIRE OF THE HOME



I

I

THE LAY OF THE LAND

GENEALOGIES OF IMPERIALISM

I am not the wheatfield.
Nor the virgin land.

—*Adrienne Rich*

PORNO-TROPICS

Consider, to begin with, a colonial scene.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus, blundering about the Caribbean in search of India, wrote home to say that the ancient mariners had erred in thinking the earth was round. Rather, he said, it was shaped like a woman's breast, with a protuberance upon its summit in the unmistakable shape of a nipple—toward which he was slowly sailing.

Columbus' image feminizes the earth as a cosmic breast, in relation to which the epic male hero is a tiny, lost infant, yearning for the Edenic nipple. The image of the earth-breast here is redolent not with the male bravura of the explorer, invested with his conquering mission, but with an uneasy sense of male anxiety, infantilization and longing for the female body. At the same time, the female body is figured as marking the boundary of the cosmos and the limits of the known world, enclosing the ragged men, with their dreams of pepper and pearls, in her indefinite, oceanic body.

Columbus' breast fantasy, like Haggard's map of Sheba's Breasts, draws on a long tradition of male travel as an erotics of ravishment. For centuries, the uncertain continents—Africa, the Americas, Asia—were figured in European lore as libidinously eroticized. Travelers' tales abounded with visions of the monstrous sexuality of far-off lands, where, as legend had it, men sported gigantic penises and women consorted with apes, feminized men's breasts flowed with milk and militarized women lopped theirs off. Renaissance travelers found an eager and lascivious audience for their spicy tales, so that, long before the era of high Victorian imperialism, Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination—a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears.

The European porno-tropics had a long tradition. As early as the second century A.D., Ptolemy wrote confidently of Africa that "the constellation of Scorpion, which pertains to the pudenda, dominates that continent."[1] Leo Africanus agreed that there was "no nation under heaven more prone to venerie" than "the Negros."[2] Francis Bacon's Hermit was visited by the Spirit of Fornication, who turned out to be a "little foule, ugly Aethiope."[3] John Ogilby, adapting the writings of Olfert Dapper, rather more tactfully informed his readers that west Africans were distinguished by "large propagators,"[4] while the planter Edward Long saw Africa as "the parent of everything that is monstrous in nature."[5] By the nineteenth century, popular lore had firmly established Africa as the quintessential zone of sexual aberration and anomaly—"the very picture," as W. D. Jordan put it, "of perverse negation."[6] The *Universal History* was citing a well-established and august tradition when it declared Africans to be "proud, lazy, treacherous, thievish, hot and addicted to all kinds of lusts."[7] It was as impossible, it insisted, "to be an *African* and not lascivious, as it is to be born in *Africa* and not be an African."[8]

Within this porno-tropic tradition, women figured as the epitome of sexual aberration and excess. Folklore saw them, even more than the men, as given to a lascivious venery so promiscuous as to border on the bestial. Sir Thomas Herbert observed of Africans "the resemblance they bear with Baboons, which I could observe kept frequent company with the Women."[9]

Long saw a lesson closer to home in the African spectacle of female sexual excess, for he identified British working-class women as inhabiting more naturally than men the dangerous borders of racial and sexual transgression: "The lower class of women in *England*," he wrote ominously, "are remarkably fond of the blacks."[10] The traveler William Smith likewise warned his readers of the perils of traveling as a white man in Africa, for, on that disorderly continent, women "if they meet with a Man they immediately strip his lower Parts and throw themselves upon him."[11]

During the Renaissance, as the "fabulous geography" of ancient travel gave way to the "militant geography" of mercantile imperialism and the triangular trade, so the bold merchant ships of Portugal, Spain, Britain and France began to draw the world into a single skein of trade routes.[12] Mercantile imperialism began to be emboldened by dreams of dominating not only a boundless imperium of commerce but also a boundless imperium of knowledge. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) gave exemplary voice to the immodesty of intellectual Renaissance expansionism. "My only earthly wish," he wrote, "is . . . to stretch the deplorably narrow limits of man's dominion over the universe to their promised bounds."[13] But Bacon's vision of a world-knowledge dominated by Europe was animated not only by an imperial geography of power but also by a gendered erotics of knowledge: "I come in very truth," he proclaimed, "leading to you Nature with all her children to bind her to your service and make her your slave."[14]

All too often, Enlightenment metaphysics presented knowledge as a relation of power between two gendered spaces, articulated by a journey and a technology of conversion: the male penetration and exposure of a veiled, female interior; and the aggressive conversion of its "secrets" into a visible, male science of the surface. Bacon deplored the fact that "while the regions of the material globe . . . have been in our times laid widely open and revealed, the intellectual globe should remain shut up within the narrow limits of old discoveries."[15] Voyaging into the enigma of infinity, there to unlock "Nature's secrets," Faust likewise cried out:

> New roads lie open to me. I
> Shall pierce the veil that hides what we desire,
> Break through to realms of abstract energy.[16]

Knowledge of the unknown world was mapped as a metaphysics of gender violence—not as the expanded recognition of cultural difference—and was validated by the new Enlightenment logic of private property and possessive individualism. In these fantasies, the world is feminized and spatially spread for male exploration, then reassembled and deployed in the interests of massive imperial power. Thus, for Rene Descartes, the expansion of male knowledge amounted to a violent property arrangement that made men

"masters and possessors of nature."[17] In the minds of these men, the imperial conquest of the globe found both its shaping figure and its political sanction in the prior subordination of women as a category of nature.

WOMEN AS THE BOUNDARY MARKERS OF EMPIRE

What is the meaning of this persistent gendering of the imperial unknown? As European men crossed the dangerous thresholds of their known worlds, they ritualistically feminized borders and boundaries. Female figures were planted like fetishes at the ambiguous points of contact, at the borders and orifices of the contest zone. Sailors bound wooden female figures to their ships' prows and baptized their ships—as exemplary threshold objects—with female names. Cartographers filled the blank seas of their maps with mermaids and sirens. Explorers called unknown lands "virgin" territory. Philosophers veiled "Truth" as female, then fantasized about drawing back the veil. In myriad ways, women served as mediating and threshold figures by means of which men oriented themselves in space, as agents of power and agents of knowledge.

The following chapters explore, in part, the historically different but persistent ways in which women served as the boundary markers of imperialism, the ambiguous mediators of what appeared to be—at least superficially—the predominantly male agon of empire. The first point I want to make, however, is that the feminizing of terra incognita was, from the outset, a strategy of violent containment—belonging in the realm of both psychoanalysis and political economy. If, at first glance, the feminizing of the land appears to be no more than a familiar symptom of male megalomania, it also betrays acute paranoia and a profound, if not pathological, sense of male anxiety and boundary loss.

As Columbus' and Haggard's images suggest, the erotics of imperial conquest were also an erotics of engulfment. At one level, the representation of the land as female is a traumatic trope, occurring almost invariably, I suggest, in the aftermath of male boundary confusion, but as a historical, not archetypal, strategy of containment. As the visible trace of paranoia, feminizing the land is a compensatory gesture, disavowing male loss of boundary by reinscribing a ritual excess of boundary, accompanied, all too often, by an excess of military violence. The feminizing of the land represents a ritualistic moment in imperial discourse, as male intruders ward off fears of narcissistic disorder by reinscribing, as natural, an excess of gender hierarchy.

Mary Douglas points out that margins are dangerous.[18] Societies are most vulnerable at their edges, along the tattered fringes of the known world. Having sailed beyond the limits of their charted seas, explorers enter what Victor Turner calls a liminal condition.[19] For Turner, a liminal condition is ambiguous, eluding "the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space."[20] There on the margins between known and

unknown, the male conquistadors, explorers and sailors became creatures of transition and threshold. As such, they were dangerous, for, as Douglas writes: "Danger lies in transitional states. . . .The person who must pass from one to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others."[21] As figures of danger, the men of margins were "licensed to waylay, steal, rape. This behaviour is even enjoined on them. To behave anti-socially is the proper expression of their marginal condition."[22] At the same time, the dangers represented by liminal people are managed by rituals that separate the marginal ones from their old status, segregating them for a time and then publicly declaring their entry into their new status. Colonial discourse repeatedly rehearses this pattern —dangerous marginality, segregation, reintegration.

IMPERIAL "DISCOVERY" AND GENDER AMBIVALENCE

Consider, in this respect, another colonial scene. In a famous drawing (ca. 1575), Jan van der Straet portrays the "discovery" of America as an eroticized encounter between a man and a woman [Fig.I.1].[23] A fully armored Vespucci stands erect and masterful before a naked and erotically

FIGURE 1.1 PORNO-TROPICS: WOMEN AS IMPERIAL BOUNDARY MARKERS. America, ca. 1600 engraving by Theodore Galle after a drawing by Jan van der Straet (ca. 1575).

inviting woman, who inclines toward him from a hammock. At first glance, the imperial lessons of the drawing seem clear. Roused from her sensual languor by the epic newcomer, the indigenous woman extends an inviting hand, insinuating sex and submission. Her nakedness and her gesture suggest a visual echo of Michelangelo's "Creation." Vespucci, the godlike arrival, is destined to inseminate her with the male seeds of civilization, fructify the wilderness and quell the riotous scenes of cannibalism in the background. As Peter Hulme puts it in a fine essay: "Land is named as female as a passive counterpart to the massive thrust of male technology."[24] America allegorically represents nature's invitation to conquest, while Vespucci, gripping the fetish instruments of imperial mastery—astrolabe, flag and sword—confronts the virgin land with the patrimony of scientific mastery and imperial might. Invested with the male prerogative of naming, Vespucci renders America's identity a dependent extension of his and stakes male Europe's territorial rights to her body and, by extension, the fruits of her land.

On closer examination, however, van der Straet's drawing, like Haggard's map and Columbus' breast fantasy, tells a double story of discovery. The inaugural scene of discovery is redolent not only of male megalomania and imperial aggression but also of male anxiety and paranoia. In the central distance of the picture, between Amerigo and America, a cannibal scene is in progress. The cannibals appear to be female and are spit-roasting a human leg. A pillar of flame and smoke issues into the sky, conjoining earth, fire, water and air in an elemental scene, structured as a visual assembly of opposites: earth-sky; sea-land; male-female; clothed-unclothed; active-passive; vertical-horizontal; raw-cooked. Situated on the shore, the threshold between land and sea, the drawing is, in almost every sense, a liminal scene.

Most notably, the boundary figures are female. Here, women mark, quite literally, the margins of the new world but they do so in such a way as to suggest a profound ambivalence in the European male. In the foreground, the explorer is of a piece—fully armored, erect and magisterial, the incarnation of male imperial power. Caught in his gaze, the woman is naked, subservient and vulnerable to his advance. In the background, however, the male body is quite literally in pieces, while the women are actively and powerfully engaged. The dismembered leg roasting on the spit evokes a disordering of the body so catastrophic as to be fatal.

This anxious vision marks one aspect, I suggest, of a recurrent doubling in male imperial discourse. This may be seen as the simultaneous dread of catastrophic boundary *loss* (implosion), associated with fears of impotence and infantilization and attended by an *excess* of boundary order and fantasies of unlimited power. In this way, the augural scene of discovery becomes a scene of ambivalence, suspended between an imperial megalomania, with its

fantasy of unstoppable rapine—and a contradictory fear of engulfment, with its fantasy of dismemberment and emasculation. The scene, like many imperial scenes, is a document both of paranoia and of megalomania.

As such, the scene is less about the soon-to-be-colonized "Other," than it is about a crisis in male imperial identity. Both Amerigo and America, I suggest, are split aspects of the European intruder, representing disavowed aspects of male identity, displaced onto a "feminized" space and managed by recourse to the prior ordering of gender.

Suspended between a fantasy of conquest and a dread of engulfment, between rape and emasculation, the scene, so neatly gendered, represents a splitting and displacement of a crisis that is, properly speaking, male. The gendering of America as simultaneously naked and passive *and* riotously violent and cannibalistic represents a doubling within the conqueror, disavowed and displaced onto a feminized scene.

As in many imperial scenes, the fear of engulfment expresses itself most acutely in the cannibal trope. In this familiar trope, the fear of being engulfed by the unknown is projected onto colonized peoples as *their* determination to devour the intruder whole. Haggard's map and van der Straet's discovery scene are no exceptions, for they both implicitly represent female sexuality as cannibalistic: the cannibal scene, the "mouth of treasure cave."

In 1733, Jonathan Swift observed:

> So geographers in Afric maps
> With savage pictures fill their gaps
> and o'er uninhabitable downs
> Place elephants instead of towns.[25]

Later, Graham Greene noted how geographers traced the word "cannibals" over the blank spaces on colonial maps. With the word cannibal, cartographers attempted to ward off the threat of the unknown by naming it, while at the same time confessing a dread that the unknown might literally rise up and devour the intruder whole. Colonial documents are replete with reminders of the fetish fascination that the blank spaces of maps cast over the lives of explorers and writers. However, the implosive anxieties suggested by the cannibal trope were just as often warded off by fantastical rites of imperial violence.

The colonial map vividly embodies the contradictions of colonial discourse. Map-making became the servant of colonial plunder, for the knowledge constituted by the map both preceded and legitimized the conquest of territory. The map is a technology of knowledge that professes to capture the truth about a place in pure, scientific form, operating under the guise of scientific exactitude and promising to retrieve and reproduce

nature exactly as it is. As such, it is also a technology of possession, promising that those with the capacity to make such perfect representations must also have the right of territorial control.

Yet the edges and blank spaces of colonial maps are typically marked with vivid reminders of the failure of knowledge and hence the tenuousness of possession. The failure of European knowledge appears in the margins and gaps of these maps in the forms of cannibals, mermaids and monsters, threshold figures eloquent of the resurgent relations between gender, race and imperialism. The map is a liminal thing, associated with thresholds and marginal zones, burdened with dangerous powers. As an exemplary icon of imperial "truth," the map, like the compass and the mirror, is what Hulme aptly calls a "magic technology," a potent fetish helping colonials negotiate the perils of margins and thresholds in a world of terrifying ambiguities.[26]

It seems crucial, therefore, to stress from the outset that the feminizing of the land is both a *poetics* of ambivalence and a *politics* of violence. The "discoverers"—filthy, ravenous, unhealthy and evil-smelling as they most likely were, scavenging along the edges of their known world and beaching on the fatal shores of their "new" worlds, their limbs pocked with abscess and ulcers, their minds infested by fantasies of the unknown—had stepped far beyond any sanctioned guarantees. Their unsavory rages, their massacres and rapes, their atrocious rituals of militarized masculinity sprang not only from the economic lust for spices, silver and gold, but also from the implacable rage of paranoia.

MAPPING THE "VIRGIN" LAND AND THE CRISIS OF ORIGINS

"Discovery" is always late. The inaugural scene is never in fact inaugural or originary: something has always gone before. Van der Straet's drawing confesses as much in its subtitle: "Americus *Re*discovers America." Louis Montrose suggests that the scene was probably understood at the time as referring to a nasty incident that reputedly occurred during one of Vespucci's earlier voyages. A young Spaniard, who was being inspected by a curious group of women, was suddenly felled with a terrific blow from behind by a woman, summarily slain, cut into pieces and roasted, in full view of his fellow countrymen.[27] This tale, with its unseemly burden of female menace and resistance to intrusion contradicts the myth of women's invitation to conquest. At the same time, it contradicts Vespucci's claim to be first.

Vespucci is, in fact, late. Nonetheless, he disavows his belatedness and claims a privileged relation to the moment of "discovery" and the scene of origins by resorting to a familiar strategy: he *names* "America," after himself. The desire to name expresses a desire for a single origin alongside a desire to control the issue of that origin. But the strategy of

naming is ambivalent, for it expresses both an anxiety about generative power and a disavowal.

Luce Irigaray suggests that the male insistence on marking "the product of copulation with *his own name*" stems from the uncertainty of the male's relation to origins.[28] "The fact of being deprived of a womb," she suggests, is "the most intolerable deprivation of man, since his contribution to gestation—his function with regard to the origin of reproduction—is hence asserted as less than evident, as open to doubt."[29] The father has no visible proof that the child is his; his gestative status is not guaranteed. The name, the patrimony, is a substitute for the missing guarantee of fatherhood; it is only the father's name that marks the child as his.

Historically, the male desire for a guaranteed relation to origin—securing, as it does, male property and power—is contradicted by the sexual doubling of origins, by women's visibly active role in producing a child and men's uncertain and fleeting contribution. To compensate for this, men diminish women's contribution (which, as Irigaray notes, can hardly be questioned) by reducing them to vessels and machines—mere bearers—without creative agency or the power to name. The insistence on the patrimony marks a denial: that something different (a woman) is needed to guarantee the reproduction of the same—the son with the same name as the father.[30]

The sexual scene of origins, I suggest, finds an analogy in the imperial scene of discovery. By flamboyantly naming "new" lands, male imperials mark them as their own, guaranteeing thereby, or so they believe, a privileged relation to origins—in the embarrassing absence of other guarantees. Hence the imperial fixation on naming, on acts of "discovery," baptismal scenes and male birthing rituals.

The imperial act of discovery can be compared with the male act of baptism. In both rituals, western men publicly disavow the creative agency of others (the colonized/women) and arrogate to themselves the power of origins. The male ritual of baptism—with its bowls of holy water, its washing, its male midwives—is a surrogate birthing ritual, during which men collectively compensate themselves for their invisible role in the birth of the child and diminish women's agency. In Christianity, at least, baptism reenacts childbirth as a male ritual. During baptism, moreover, the child is named—after the father, not the mother. The mother's labors and creative powers (hidden in her "confinement" and denied social recognition) are diminished, and women are publicly declared unfit to inaugurate the human soul into the body of Christ. In the eyes of Christianity, women are incomplete birthers: the child must be born again and named, by men.

Like baptism, the imperial act of discovery is a surrogate birthing ritual: the lands are already peopled, as the child is already born. Discovery, for this reason, is a *retrospective* act. As Mary Louise Pratt points out, the discovery

has no existence on its own: "It only gets 'made' for real after the traveler (or other survivor) returns home and brings it into being through texts: a name on a map, a report to the Royal Geographical Society, the Foreign Office, the London Mission Society, a diary, a lecture, a travel book."[31] Discovery, as Pratt remarks, usually involves a journey to a far-flung region, asking the local inhabitants if they know of a nearby river, lake or waterfall, paying them to take one there, then "discovering" the site, usually by the passive act of seeing it. During these extravagant acts of discovery, imperial men reinvent a moment of pure (male) origin and mark it visibly with one of Europe's fetishes: a flag, a name on a map, a stone, or later perhaps, a monument. I will return, in due course, to the question of the fetish and its relation to the crisis of origins.

THE MYTH OF THE EMPTY LANDS

> Guiana is a countrey that hath yet her maydenhead, never sackt, turned, nor wrought
>
> —*Walter Raleigh*

The myth of the virgin land is also the myth of the empty land, involving both a gender and a racial dispossession. Within patriarchal narratives, to be virgin is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency, passively awaiting the thrusting, male insemination of history, language and reason.[32] Within colonial narratives, the eroticizing of "virgin" space also effects a territorial appropriation, for if the land is virgin, colonized peoples cannot claim aboriginal territorial rights, and white male patrimony is violently assured as the sexual and military insemination of an interior void. This doubled theme—the disavowed agency of women and the colonized—recurs throughout the following chapters.

The colonial journey into the virgin interior reveals a contradiction, for the journey is figured as proceeding forward in geographical space but backward in historical time, to what is figured as a prehistoric zone of racial and gender difference. One witnesses here a recurrent feature of colonial discourse. Since indigenous peoples are not supposed to be spatially there—for the lands are "empty"—they are symbolically displaced onto what I call *anachronistic space*, a trope that gathered (as I explore in more detail below) full administrative authority as a technology of surveillance in the late Victorian era. According to this trope, colonized people—like women and the working class in the metropolis—do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans, atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency—the living embodiment of the archaic "primitive."

A presiding dilemma faced colonials, however, for the "empty" lands were visibly peopled, while traces of the peoples' antiquity lay obviously to hand in the form of ruins, ancient settlements, skulls and fossils. Here lies at least one reason for the Victorian obsession with survivals and traces, ruins and skeletons—allegorical reminders of the failure of a single narrative of origins. In Chapters 4, 5 and 10, I explore the ramifications of these colonial dilemmas in more detail.

For women, the myth of the virgin land presents specific dilemmas, with important differences for colonial or colonized women, as I argue in Chapters 9 and 10. Women are the earth that is to be discovered, entered, named, inseminated and, above all, owned. Symbolically reduced, in male eyes, to the space on which male contests are waged, women experience particular difficulties laying claim to alternative genealogies and alternative narratives of origin and naming. Linked symbolically to the land, women are relegated to a realm beyond history and thus bear a particularly vexed relation to narratives of historical change and political effect. Even more importantly, women are figured as property belonging to men and hence as lying, by definition, outside the male contests over land, money and political power.

It is important to stress from the outset, however, that the gendering of imperialism took very different forms in different parts of the world. India, for one, was seldom imaged as a virgin land, while the iconography of the harem was not part of Southern African colonial erotics. North African, Middle Eastern and Asian women were, all too often, trammeled by the iconography of the veil, while African women were subjected to the civilizing mission of cotton and soap. In other words, Arab women were to be "civilized" by being undressed (unveiled), while sub-Saharan women were to be civilized by being dressed (in clean, white, British cotton). These sumptuary distinctions were symptomatic of critical differences in the legislative, economic and political ways in which imperial commodity racism was imposed on different parts of the world.

DOMESTICITY AND COMMODITY RACISM

> *∂omes\ic*, a. & n. 1. Of the home, household, or family affairs.
> *∂omestic\ate*, v.t. Naturalize (colonists, animals) . . . civilize (savages)
>
> —*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*

In 1899, the year that the Anglo-Boer War broke out in South Africa, an advertisement for Pears' Soap in *McClure's Magazine* [Fig. 1.2] announced:

> The first step towards lightening THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness. PEARS' SOAP is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth as civilization advances, while amongst the cultured of all nations it holds the highest place—it is the ideal toilet soap.[33]

The advertisement shows an admiral decked in pure imperial white, washing his hands in his cabin as his steamship crosses the oceanic threshold into the realm of empire. In this image, private domesticity and the imperial market—the two spheres vaunted by middle-class Victorians as entirely and naturally distinct—converge in a single commodity spectacle. The domestic sanctum of the white man's bathroom gives privileged vantage onto the global realm of commerce, so that imperial progress is consumed at a glance—as *panoptical time*.

The porthole is both window and mirror. The window, icon of imperial surveillance and the Enlightenment idea of knowledge as penetration, opens onto public scenes of economic conversion. One scene depicts a kneeling African gratefully receiving the Pears' soap as he might genuflect before a religious fetish. The mirror, emblem of Enlightenment selfconsciousness, reflects the sanitized image of white, male, imperial hygiene. Domestic hygiene, the ad implies, purifies and preserves the white male body from contamination in the threshold zone of empire. At the same time, the domestic commodity guarantees white male power, the genuflection of Africans and rule of the world. On the wall, an electric light bulb signifies scientific rationality and spiritual advance. In this way, the household commodity spells the lesson of imperial progress and capitalist civilization: civilization, for the white man, advances and brightens through his four beloved fetishes—soap, the mirror, light and white clothing. As I explore in more detail below, these domestic fetishes recur throughout late Victorian commodity kitsch and the popular culture of the time.

The first point about the Pears' advertisement is that it figures imperialism as coming into being through *domesticity*. At the same time, imperial domesticity is a domesticity without women. The commodity fetish, as the central form of the industrial Enlightenment, reveals what liberalism would like to forget: the domestic is political, the political is gendered. What could not be admitted into male rationalist discourse (the economic value of women's domestic labor) is disavowed and projected onto the realm of the "primitive" and the zone of empire. At the same time, the economic value of colonized cultures is domesticated and projected onto the realm of the "prehistoric."

A characteristic feature of the Victorian middle class was its peculiarly intense preoccupation with rigid boundaries. In imperial fiction and commodity kitsch, boundary objects and liminal scenes recur ritualistically. As colonials traveled back and forth across the thresholds of their known world, crisis and boundary confusion were warded off and contained by fetishes, absolution rituals and liminal scenes. Soap and cleaning rituals became central to the demarcation of body boundaries and the policing of social hierarchies. Cleansing and boundary rituals are integral to most cultures; what characterized Victorian cleaning rituals, however, was their peculiarly intense relation to money.

I am doubly interested in the Pears' Soap ad because it registers an epochal shift that I see as having taken place in the culture of imperialism in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This was the shift from *scientific racism*—embodied in anthropological, scientific and medical journals, travel writing and ethnographies—to what I call *commodity racism*. Commodity racism—in the specifically Victorian forms of advertising and photography, the imperial Expositions and the museum movement—converted the narrative of imperial Progress into mass-produced *consumer spectacles*.

The first step towards lightening

The White Man's Burden

is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness

Pears' Soap

is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth as civilization advances, while amongst the cultured of all nations it holds the highest place—it is the ideal toilet soap.

FIGURE 1.2 IMPERIAL DOMESTICITY.

During the eighteenth century, what Pratt calls "planetary consciousness" emerged.[34] Planetary consciousness imagined drawing the whole world into a single "science of order," in Foucault's phrase. Carl Linne provided the impetus for this immodest idea with the publication in 1735 of *Systema Natura,* which promised to organize all plant forms into a single genesis narrative.[35] For Linne, moreover, *sexual* reproduction became the paradigm for natural form in general.

Inspired by Linne, hosts of explorers, botanists, natural historians and geographers set out with the vocation of ordering the world's forms into a global science of the surface and an optics of truth. In this way, the Enlightenment project coincided with the imperial project. As Pratt puts it: "For what were the slave trade and the plantation system if not massive experiments in social engineering and discipline, serial production, the systematization of human life, the standardizing of persons?"[36] The global science of the surface was a *conversion* project, dedicated to transforming the earth into a single economic currency, a single pedigree of history and a universal standard of cultural value—set and managed by Europe.

What concerns me here, however, is that, if the imperial science of the surface promised to unroll over the earth a single "Great Map of Mankind," and cast a single, European, male authority over the whole of the planet, ambition far outran effect for quite some time. The project was fissured with intellectual paradox, incompletion and ignorance. The technological capacity to map and catalog the earth's surface remained, for some time, haphazard, shoddy and downright inept. The promoters of the global project sorely lacked the technical capacity to formally reproduce the optical "truth" of nature as well as the economic capacity to distribute this truth for global consumption. In order for this to happen, the global project had to wait until the second half of the nineteenth century, with the emergence, I suggest, of commodity spectacle—in particular photography.

The following chapters are concerned with this shift from scientific racism to commodity racism, by which evolutionary racism and imperial power were marketed on a hitherto unimaginable scale. In the process, the Victorian middle-class home became a space for the display of imperial spectacle and the reinvention of race, while the colonies—in particular Africa—became a theater for exhibiting the Victorian cult of domesticity and the reinvention of gender.

Domesticity denotes both a *space* (a geographic and architectural alignment) and a *social relation to power*. The cult of domesticity—far from being a universal fact of "nature"—has an historical genealogy. The idea of "the domestic" cannot be applied willy-nilly to any house or dwelling as a universal or natural fact.[37] So often vaunted as involving a naturally occurring, universal space—ensconced within the innermost interiors of

society, yet lying theoretically beyond the domain of political analysis—the cult of domesticity involves processes of social metamorphosis and political subjection of which gender is the abiding but not the only dimension.

Etymologically, the verb to domesticate is akin to dominate, which derives from *dominus*, lord of the *domum*, the home.[38] Until 1964, however, the verb to domesticate also carried as one of its meanings the action "to civilize."[39] In the colonies (as I explore in more detail in Chapter 6), the mission station became a threshold institution for transforming domesticity rooted in European gender and class roles into domesticity as controlling a colonized people. Through the rituals of domesticity, increasingly global and more often than not violent, animals, women and colonized peoples were wrested from their putatively "natural" yet, ironically, "unreasonable" state of "savagery" and inducted through the domestic progress narrative into a hierarchical relation to white men.

The historical idea of domesticity thus bears an ambivalent relation to the idea of imperial nature, for "domestication" bears energetically upon nature in order to produce a social sphere that is considered to be natural and universal in the first place. In the colonies, in other words, European *culture*

FIGURE 1.3 DOMESTICATING THE EMPIRE.

FIGURE 1.4 BRITAIN'S NATIONAL IDENTITY TAKES IMPERIAL FORM.

(the civilizing mission) became ironically necessary to reproduce *nature* (the "natural" divisions of domestic labor), an anomaly that took much social energy—and much domestic work—to conceal. The idea of progress—"nature" improving itself through time— was crucial to managing this anomaly.

The cult of domesticity, I argue, became central to British imperial identity, contradictory and conflictual as that was, and an intricate dialectic emerged. Imperialism suffused the Victorian cult of domesticity and the historic separation of the private and the public, which took shape around colonialism and the idea of race. At the same time, colonialism took shape around the Victorian invention of domesticity and the idea of the home.[40] [Fig. 1.3, Fig. 1.4.]

This, then, is a central theme of this book: as domestic space became racialized, colonial space became domesticated. Certainly, commodity spectacle was not the only cultural form for the mediation of domestic colonialism. Travel writing, novels, postcards, photographs, pornography and other cultural forms can, I believe, be as fruitfully investigated for this crucial relation between domesticity and empire. Commodity spectacle, however, spread well beyond the literate and propertied elite and gave domestic colonialism particularly far-reaching clout.

PANOPTICAL TIME

> We need no longer go to History to trace (human Nature) in all its stages and periods . . . now the Great Map of Mankind is unrolld at once; and there is no state or Gradation of barbarism and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same instant under our View.
>
> —*Edmund Burke*

The imperial science of the surface drew on two centralizing tropes: the invention of what I call *panoptical time* and *anachronistic space*. With the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin bestowed on the global project a decisive dimension—secular time as the agent of a unified world history. Just as Linne attempted to classify the fragmentary botanical record into a single archive of natural form, so social evolutionists after 1859 undertook the massive attempt of reading from the discontinuous natural record (which Darwin called "a history of the world imperfectly kept") a single pedigree of evolving world history. Now not only natural space but also historical time could be collected, assembled and mapped onto a global science of the surface.

Johannes Fabian's important meditation on time and anthropology, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object,* shows how the social evolutionists broke the hold of Biblical chronology—that is, chronicle time—by secularizing time and placing it at the disposal of the empirical project—that is, chronological time.[41] In order to do this, he points out, "they *spatialized* Time." "The paradigm of evolution rested on a conception of Time that was not only secularized and naturalized but also thoroughly spatialized." The axis of time was projected onto the axis of space and history became global. With social Darwinism, the taxonomic project, first applied to nature, was now applied to cultural history. Time became a geography of social power, a map from which to read a global allegory of "natural" social difference. Most importantly, history took on the character of a spectacle.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, panoptical time came into its own. By panoptical time, I mean the image of global history consumed—at a glance—in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility. In the seventeenth century, Bossuet, in *Discours sur l'histoire universelle,* argued that any attempt to produce a universal history depended on being able to figure "the order of times" (*"comme d'un coup d'oeil"*) at a glance.[42] To meet the "scientific" standards set by the natural historians and empiricists of the eighteenth century, a visual paradigm was needed to display evolutionary progress as a measurable spectacle. The exemplary figure that emerged was the evolutionary family Tree of Man.

Renaissance nature—divine nature—was understood as cosmological, organized according to God's will into an irrevocable chain of being. By contrast, the social evolutionist Herbert Spencer envisioned evolution not as a chain of being but as a tree. As Fabian puts it: "The tree has always been one of the simplest forms of constructing classificatory schemes based on subsumption and hierarchy."[43] The tree offered an ancient image of a natural genealogy of power. The social evolutionists, however, took the divine, cosmological tree and secularized it, turning it into a switchboard image mediating between nature and culture as a natural image of evolutionary human progress.

Mantegazza's "Morphological Tree of the Human Races," for example, shows vividly how the image of the tree was put at the disposal of the racial scientists [Fig. 1.5]. In Mantegazza's image of global history, three principles emerge. First, mapped against the tree, the world's discontinuous cultures appear to be marshaled within a single, European Ur-narrative. Second, human history can be imaged as naturally teleological, an organic process of upward growth, with the European as the apogee of progress. Third, disobliging historical discontinuities can be ranked, subdued and subordinated into a hierarchical structure of branching time—the differential progress of the races mapped against the tree's self-evident boughs.

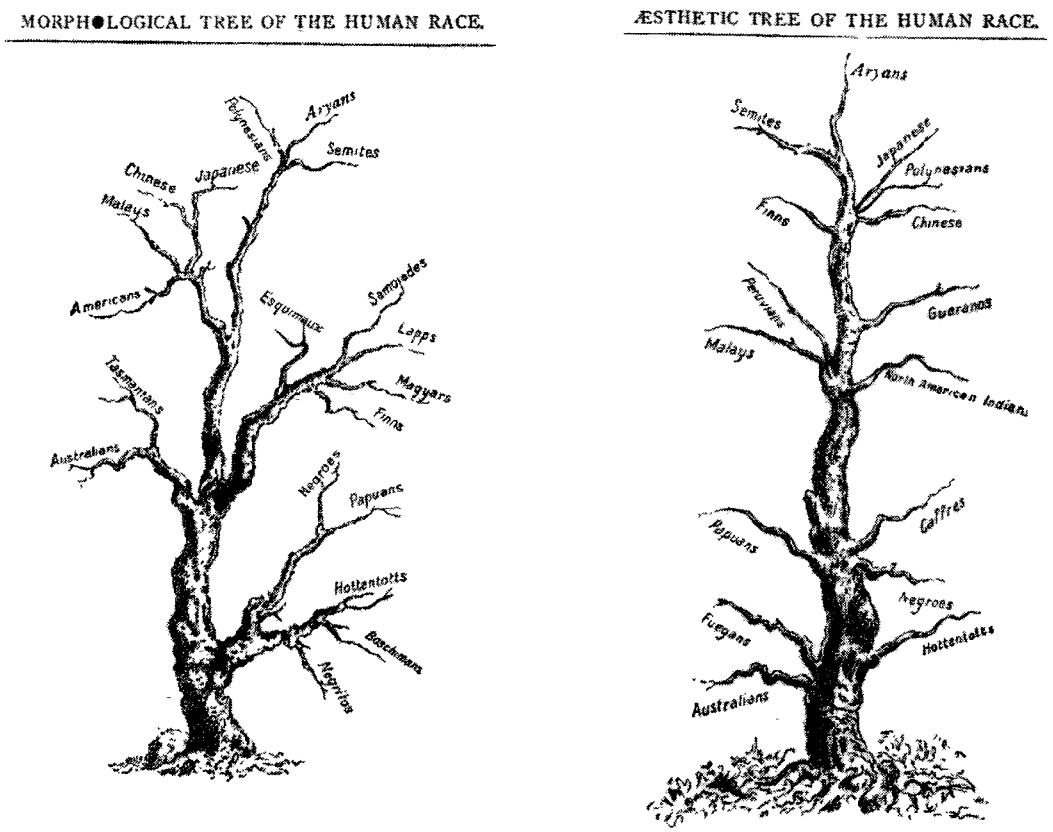


FIGURE 1.5 INVENTING PROGRESS: THE RACIAL FAMILY TREE.

In the tree of time, racial hierarchy and historical progress became the fait accomplis of nature.

The tree image, however, was attended by a second, decisive image: the Family of Man. The "Family Group of the Katarrhinen" offers a good example [Fig. 1.6]. In this family group, evolutionary progress is represented by a series of distinct anatomical types, organized as a linear image of progress. In this image, the eye follows the evolutionary types up the page, from the archaic to the modern, so that progress seems to unfold naturally before the eye as a series of evolving marks on the body. Progress takes on the character of a spectacle, under the form of the family. The entire chronological history of human development is captured and consumed at a glance, so that anatomy becomes an allegory of progress and history is reproduced as a technology of the visible [Fig. 1.7].[44]

Social evolutionism and anthropology thus gave to politics and economics a concept of natural time as *familial*. Time was not only

secularized, it was *domesticated*, a point Fabian, for one, does not address. The merging of tree and family into the family Tree of Man provided scientific racism with a *gendered* image for popularizing and disseminating the idea of *racial* progress. There is a problem here, however, for the family Tree represents evolutionary time as a *time without women*. The family image is an image of disavowal, for it contains only men, arranged as a linear frieze of solo males ascending toward the apogee of the individual *Homo sapiens*. Each epoch is represented by a single male type, who is characterized in turn by visible anatomical stigmata. From the outset, the idea of racial progress was gendered but in such a way as to render women invisible as historical agents.

In this way, the figure of the Family of Man reveals a persistent contradiction. Historical progress is naturalized as an evolving family, while women as historical actors are disavowed and relegated to the realm of nature. History is thus figured as *familial*, while the family as an institution is seen as beyond history. The chapters that follow (in particular Chapter 11) are centrally concerned with the historical implications of this paradox.

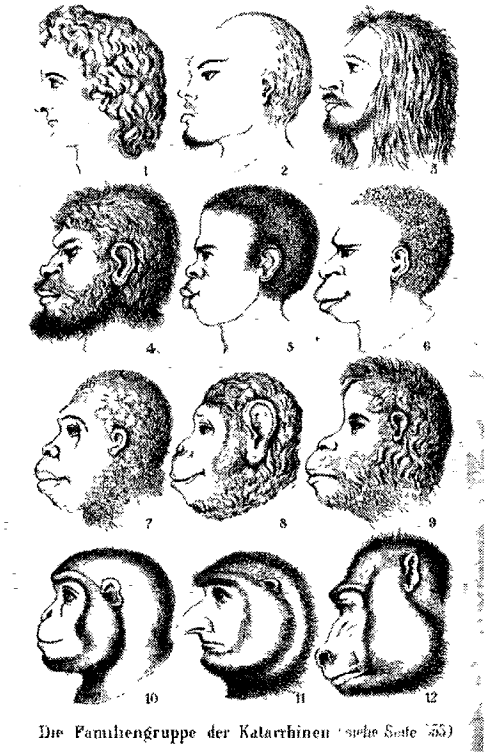


FIGURE 1.6 "THE FAMILY GROUP OF THE KATARRHINEN": INVENTING THE FAMILY OF MAN.

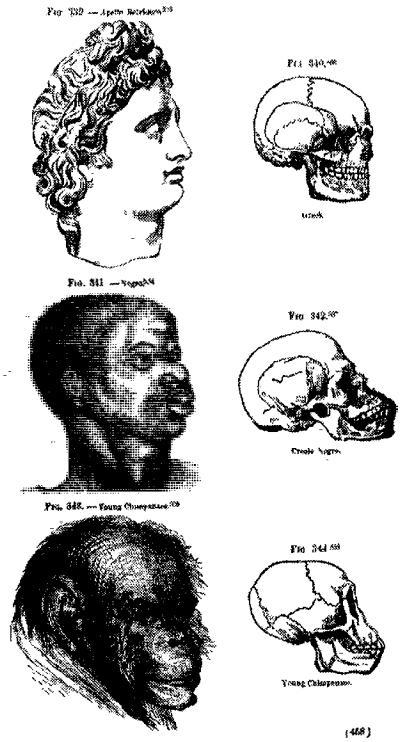


FIGURE 1.7 PANOPTICAL TIME: PROGRESS CONSUMED AT A GLANCE.