



Legg, Stephen (2007) Beyond the European province: Foucault and postcolonialism. In: Space, knowledge and power: Foucault and geography. Ashgate, Aldershot, pp. 265-288. ISBN 9780754646556

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## Chapter 24

# Beyond the European Province: Foucault and Postcolonialism

Stephen Legg

### Introduction

The colonization of most of the free world between the 16th and 21st centuries has brought not only territorial but also epistemic and historiographical violence and domination. The end of formal occupation has not signalled the withdrawal of colonial categories, procedures and technologies of rule, nor has it beheaded Europe as the sovereign subject in deference to which many postcolonial<sup>1</sup> histories and geographies are constructed (Chakrabarty 2000). Whilst Michel Foucault has provided many of the tools that are necessary to unpick the power-knowledge relationships of post-Enlightenment Europe, especially in their spatial groundedness, his silence on the colonial construction of European modernity and the mutual constitution of ‘metropole’ and ‘periphery’ is astounding.

This chapter will begin by examining the haunting presence of colonialism in Foucault’s writings and will then explore how geographers have tried to commune with our discipline’s colonial past and postcolonial present. The use of Foucault in the work of Edward Said and the Subaltern Studies Group will be investigated to suggest a movement towards an analysis of the lived and the governmental that chimes with much existing geographical research into the postcolonial.

The path I tread here is only one of the many routes through a field of study that could span, at least, Alexander the Great to George W. Bush and Tony Blair, and every country on earth whether as a colonized, colonizing, or indirectly influenced nation. Postcolonial forces operate at every scale, from trans-national flows of capital or bodies, global imaginary geographies, national stereotypes, urban re-mappings, to domestic routines and individual psychology. Postcolonial theory itself is a complex mix of theorists, including Homi Bhabha, Jaques Derrida, Franz Fanon and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Moreover, Foucault has been used to analyze

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1 I use the term ‘postcolonial’ here to refer to the interaction between colonized and colonizing populations following initial contact, although this need not have been face to face, such as in the mediated contact of trade networks. The term thus encompasses the experiences of both groups during and after the period of formal rule, if there was one. See Gandhi (1998, 3–4) for a discussion of the term.

postcolonial relations throughout the world, including Latin America (Trigo 2002, Outtes 2003), Africa (Mbembe 2001), ex-settler colonies (Clayton 2000; Dean and Hindess 1998; Henry 2002) and South Asia. The predominance of the latter in postcolonial theory may be a problem in itself, globalizing the experiences of a few colonies into the universal experience of the colonized. Such tendencies can be countered by a continuing commitment to studying the particular and specific instances of colonization and postcolonial experience within globally structuring systems of postcolonial rule.

### **The Absent Presence of Colonialism in Foucault**

Peter A. Jackson (2003) has summarized the many critiques of Foucault that claim that the ‘difference’ he theorizes is that of ‘complexity’, difference *within* a society, rather than ‘multiplicity’, differences *between* societies. In his mostly local or national scale of study this is true, a fact compounded by his focusing on Europe in general, and France in particular. There are enough passing references to show that Foucault was aware of the importance of the colonial world, yet the significance of these traces of colonialism is much debated. In 1989 Uta Liebman Schaub suggested that the non-West operated as a counter-discourse or subtext that affected Foucault’s mode of thought; the unspoken ground from which he attacked Western thought. Schaub (1989, 308) even suggested that Foucault, like many of his contemporaries, was influenced by eastern philosophy. However, critical commentary has focused more on how Europe and its colonies were mutually constitutive, and whether this was acknowledged in Foucault’s writings. These constitutions can be separately considered, rhetorically if not historically, as practical, epistemic, and disciplinary.

#### *A Practically Constitutive Outside*

A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself. (Foucault 1975–76 [2003], 103)

In a 1976 lecture Foucault admitted that the techniques and weapons Europe transported to its colonies had a ‘boomerang’ effect on the institutions, apparatuses and techniques of power in the West (see above). However, this is one of his few acknowledgements that the compendium of power techniques he assembled regarding Europe had extra-European origins (for further brief comments see Foucault 1972, 210; Foucault 1977, 29, 314; Foucault 1980, 17, 77, and the quotation below from Foucault 1961).<sup>2</sup> In a summary of postcolonial research, Timothy Mitchell showed that the panopticon itself, along with school monitoring, population government and

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2 The ongoing translation of Foucault’s lecture courses promises to add much, however, to postcolonial readings of his work. See references in *Psychiatric Power* (Foucault [1973–74] 2006, chapter four), and, especially *Security, Territory, Population* (Foucault forthcoming-b);

its cultural analysis, British liberalism's imagination, English literature curriculums and colonial medicine all had some of their many origins in the colonies (Mitchell 2000, 3). Driver and Gilbert (1998) have also shown how the material landscape of London was, in various ways, an intensely imperial space. These examples are beyond the more obviously 'colonial' techniques of slavery, shipping, and plantations that impacted back on Europe. All of these imperial techniques were topographically re-inscribed in Europe and often failed to reveal their travels and complicity in consolidating the effects of territorial expansion. Despite his brilliance at thinking 'power-in-spacing', Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988 [2000], 1449–50) justly claims that Foucault's analysis actually produced a miniature version of colonialism, one that replayed the management of space and peripheral populations through the screen allegories of doctors, prisons, and the insane.

While Edward Said's eventual rejection of Foucault concerned his broader philosophy, he also criticized Foucault's Eurocentrism and tendency to universalize from French case studies (Said 1984a, 10). The ethnocentrism of this work clashed with Said's belief that discipline was used to administer, study and reconstruct, then to occupy, rule and exploit, almost all of the world (Said 1984b, 227). To Said, Foucault's carceral system was strikingly like the Orientalism he described. The systems were, of course, linked by networks of discursive and practical connections (Lester 1998). But beyond the humanitarian debates sparked by colonialism or the commodities and images consumed in Europe, there were also more fundamental processes of mutual constitution. Colonial environments threatened an intermixing of races, genders and classes that demanded reinforced distinctions of race, sexuality, culture and class (Mitchell 2000, 5). These thematics found their way back to the metropole and relayed a symbolic and material reworking of the European Self.

### *An Epistemologically Constitutive Outside*

Within the universality of Occidental *ratio* there is to be found the dividing line that is the Orient: the Orient that one imagines to be the origin, the vertiginous point at which nostalgia and the promises of return originate; the Orient that is presented to the expansionist rationality of the Occident but that remains eternally inaccessible because it always remains the limit. (Foucault 1961, iv, translated in Schaub 1989, 308)

Pre-dating Said's (1978) *Orientalism* by 17 years, Foucault acknowledged in a previously un-translated passage (although see Foucault 2005, xxx) the formative role of an imagined Orient on European collective memory (see above). While Said famously drew out this imagination, Ann Laura Stoler (1995) has done much to examine how imperial notions of race and sexuality constituted the European bourgeoisie. Drawing on Foucault's histories of sexuality (1979, 1986a, 1986b) and the *Society Must be Defended* lecture courses (1975–76 [2003]), Stoler showed that discourses of sex were on a 'circuitous imperial route' and that bourgeois identity

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here Europe itself is portrayed as a post (Holy Roman) imperial space, while the constitutive nature of the colonial economy is explicitly addressed.

was itself racially coded. Within the complex routings by which biopower sought to regulate national populations, sex became a state target while race discourses became the effect, taking up and re-moulding older forms of racism. While Mitchell (2000, 13) warns that this represents a double overlooking of Empire, negating the colonial origins of 18th–19th century racisms, Stoler acknowledged the paradoxical nature of a colonial biopolitical state that claimed to augment life, yet administered the right to kill. It was the role of race to decide who would live and die, the administration of what Achille Mbembe (2003) has termed ‘necropolitics’. This racialized politics of classification was taken up in Stoler’s (2002) later consideration of the normalizing activities of the state in the colonies themselves. Racism was here shown to thrive upon lines of unclear difference, combining pseudo-scientific symbolics of blood with cultural contagion theory.

As such, Stoler (2002, 142) showed that though Eurocentric, Foucault was not blind to race and its potential imperial connections. She also showed that, given Foucault’s two years spent in Tunisia (1966–68), this Eurocentrism remains intriguing, as does the lack of study of the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1972) that he wrote on the basis of his lectures there. Robert Young (2001, 395–397) has written of Foucault’s experiences and interest in political struggles at this time, but also how he used his distance from home to critically and ethnographically consider France and the West. As against *Madness and Civilization* (Foucault 1967), Foucault (1972) argued against the Other’s separated and silenced existence. Homi Bhabha (1992 [2000], 130) has similarly claimed that within Foucault’s ‘massive forgetting’ there is a metaleptic presence of postcolonialism. In *The Order of Things* (Foucault 1970, 369) anthropology emerges to confront the universalist claims of history, marking it out as the product of a European homeland. Historicist claims are thus exposed as dependent upon the technologies of colonialism, establishing anthropology as the counter-discourse of modernity.

However, such interpretations read much into the silences and cracks of Foucault’s writings. This corpus, Mitchell Dean (1986 [1994], 289) has suggested, saw Foucault pull back from the challenge of deconstructing the ‘West’ as a critical ethnographer and re-colonize his radical insights within an analysis of western modernity that, Mitchell (2000, 16) argues, reproduced the spatialization of modernity. The historical time-scheme of colonizing Europe captured the histories of overseas and returned them to the ordering, historicist logic of the colonial core. Undoing this process, and bias in Foucault’s writings, is not just a task of re-writing history, but of pursuing discourses, and disciplines, that though complicit with colonial states in the past, preserve the potential to mobilize counter-discourses of modernity.

### *A Discipline Constituted Outside*

Felix Driver (1992) used Foucault’s writings to excavate a colonial history of the geographical discipline that paid attention to its institutional, rather than philosophical or scientific, genealogy. He suggested a thoroughly Foucauldian reading that would pay attention to the various types of powers at play within the rise of geography

as a discipline and the internal contradictions and resistances it came across in the consolidatory age of *Geography Militant* (Driver 1999). Stressing the spatiality of the discipline, Daniel Clayton (2001/02) has emphasized the need to trace these resistances in the colonial margins, as well as the imperial metropole.

Derek Gregory (1998) further mapped out the imaginary geographies by which geography as a discipline had imposed its Eurocentric worldview on the territories it surveyed. As with the sovereign Europe Foucault analyzed, the discipline of geography has been one of 'constitutive exclusions and erasures' (Gregory 1998, 72), viewing certain things and ignoring others through representational 'geo-graphs'. For example, the geo-graph of 'absolutizing time and space' established Europe as the sovereign centre, but also divided the periphery into those more or less deserving of rights and along axes of alterity, forming a structured yet unstable hierarchy of difference. Other modalities concerned exhibiting the other, normalizing the subject and abstracting culture and nature, which all contributed to the view of the world presented by the geographical discipline to its students and author audiences through its home institutions.

While the implications of geography within the colonial past is increasingly clear, the colonial present requires constant attention. Jennifer Robinson (2003) has focused attention on how to bring about postcolonial geographical practice. Robinson links Chakrabarty's assertion of Europe as the historical core to the geographical practices that put it there and to the universalizing tendencies of some post-1960s geographical theory. To undermine the epistemic violence of these traditions Robinson suggests: we acknowledge location, and the limits to analysis it poses; that we reincorporate area and development studies in innovative formations; that we engage with regional scholarship that disrupts dominant locations; and that we transform the conditions for the production and circulation of knowledge, regarding publication, sources and readership. These processes must, of course, take place within active research. Geographical research along these lines has been framed within readings of Foucault following Said's influential interpretation.

### **Said: The Presence of Foucault**

There is a certain irony in the discrepancy between the Foucault that Said propounded in his earlier theoretical writings, and the afterlife of Foucault's analytical categories that were taken up in colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial studies more broadly. While Said initially stressed the worldliness of texts and the materiality of discourse, the various studies that claimed his lineage were often focused on an individual text or the relationships between separate texts, rather than their historical and geographical contingency. Yet, while Said was an early champion of Foucault, it is also the case that he (1993 [2004], 214) rejected Foucault for his political quietism, while also claiming that he had got all he needed from Foucault by the publication of *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1977). From this point onwards the distance between Said's humanism and Foucault's anti-humanism became more pronounced.

Despite this, Said moved in the 1990s towards a geographically grounded form of analysis which has more in common with Foucault's post-1978 lectures and writings on government than his earlier linked, but distinct, work on the materiality of discourse. This trajectory, and the positioning of geographical research within it, will now be traced.

### *The Materiality and Discontinuity of Discourse*

In 1972, in the first edition of the journal *boundary 2*, Edward Said advocated the use of Michel Foucault (Said 1972, the article was re-written and published in Said, 1975, 277–343).<sup>3</sup> Against later criticism of Said's approach being atemporal and textual, he emphasized four particular elements of Foucault's work. 'Reversability' supplanted the search for origins, development, or authors with the primacy of discourse and verbal usage. 'Discontinuity' undermined the idea of unlimited, silent, and continuous discourses in favour of the discontinuous practicalities that cross, juxtapose and ignore each other. This emphasis on difference, Said suggested, could be extended to include the differences not just within, but between societies, privileging *histories* over History (referencing Foucault 1961). As such, the idea of discourse from Foucault (1970, 1972) was one of dispersal and fragmentation that saw any seriality as an internal order within dispersal. The third Foucauldian method was that of 'specificity' which saw the boundaries of individual discourses policed by what is deemed wrong or forbidden, while the final method was that of locating 'exteriority', the transcendental homelessness of subjectivities incompatible with a discursive norm, whether deemed mad, dangerous or, like the Marquis de Sade, a subject of total desire.

However, it was the idea of discourse presented in 1978's *Orientalism* which had a longer lasting effect, one which Young (2001, 386) claims is dissimilar to that of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. *Orientalism* depicted the dichotomization and essentialization of Europe's worldwide geopolitical imagination. The discourse of orientalism could be traced in academic disciplines, a broader ontological and epistemological division between East and West, and finally in the institutions that governed the Orient. While flitting between different writings and institutions, Said focused on certain texts without attendant study of their environments of production. The emphasis on texts written from other texts led to an analysis of stereotypes that were posed as mis-representations, marking a move from a Foucauldian discourse analysis to a more Gramscian investigation of ideological representations. Timothy Brennan (2000) has, indeed, asserted that *Orientalism* is not Foucauldian due to its humanist specializations, sweeping syntheses, aesthetic indulgence and totalizing appetites. The sprawling debate from this tension is summarized in Ashcroft and

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3 Against this, I can find no reference to Said in Foucault's writings. This is despite a brief correspondence following the publication of *Orientalism* (Salusinszky 1987, 136) and a meeting in 1979 in Foucault's flat, where Said noticed his *Beginnings* (1975) on the bookshelf (Said 2000a).



Ahluwalia (1999, 76–80), but within this argument the significance is perhaps that without Gramsci's notion of hegemonic power relations, Said felt that Foucault alone lacked political bite.

### *The Spiderless Web*

In 1984 Said marked the beginning of his formal distancing from Foucault. While still favouring Foucault's political view of language and his geopolitical interest in the control of territory, he launched two critiques based around notions of agency and power. Firstly, he questioned Foucault's lack of interest in explaining why people or things were distributed as they were (Said 1984b, 220). Without immediacy or intentionality the historical evolutions of power Foucault suggests would have no drive. As Alison Blunt (1994, 54) has suggested, contra Foucault, it *does* matter who is writing; their conditions of authorship, gendered identity, or perception of audience must play a part. Similarly, Alan Lester's emphasis on trans-imperial networks of discursive connections maintains a focus on the agency of individuals exercised in facilitating flows and constructing networks (Lester 2002, 29). Said later referred to the tension between the anonymity of discourse and the will to power of particular egos as an 'almost terrifying stalemate' (Said 1984a, 6) and forcefully rejected the notion that he suggested there was no voice to answer back against resistance (Said 2002, 1).

Said's criticism of agency fed into the later comments on Foucault's supposedly passive and sterile view of power, which, he claimed, failed to consider why power was gained and held on to. The existence of class struggle, imperialist war, and resistance show us that power does remain with rulers, monopolies and states: as Said (1984b, 221) put it, you cannot have the web without the spider. As such, Foucault failed to consider the intentionality and effort of history, refused to imagine a future rather than analyze the present, and failed to consider the space of existence beyond the power of the present (Said 1984b, 245–7).

This critical position was maintained throughout Said's later writings. In his 1984 obituary article for Foucault, Said respectfully emphasized Foucault's influence and his entangling of power and resistance, yet still decried the pessimism and determinism of his later work (Said 1984a, 3, 6). Said's (1986) article on 'Foucault's imagination of power' stands as his most vociferous rejection of Foucault's account of the supposedly unremitting and unstoppable expansion of power. As against Noam Chomsky's insurgent consideration of what could vanquish power relations, and his utopian postulations of what cannot be imagined, Foucault was claimed to only imagine what one could do with power if one had it, and what one could imagine if one had power. As such, Foucault's imagination, unlike Gramsci's, was thought to be with power, rather than against it. Paul Bové (1986 [2001]) approved of Said's rejection of Foucault, warning of the 'immoral consequences' of the latter's system, which prevented a recognition of resistance, denied the imagination of alternative orders and explained all social phenomenon by the structure of power. Said's wariness of Foucault's emphasis on assimilation and acculturation was re-



emphasized in a 1986 interview (Salusinszky 1987, 137) and was unchanged by 1993 when Foucault was portrayed as scribing the victory of power (Said, Beezer and Osbourne 1993 [2004], 214).

Said acknowledged that his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) was written against the negative effects of Foucault in the book to which it was the sequel, *Orientalism* (Said in Said et al. 1993 [2004]). Against the impression of an orientalism that continued to grow without contestation, a wider geographical scope and an emphasis on the contestation of territory allowed Said to examine people's counter-will as framed by Raymond Williams's cultural reading of Gramsci. In the 20 years since his *boundary 2* article, the Foucault of reversibility, discontinuity, specificity and exteriority was lost amongst the more abstract Foucault of power-knowledge relations. This bias fails to do justice to the relevance and utility of Foucault's earlier and later writings on archaeology, discourse and governmentality that are undergoing a current re-assessment beyond Said's dismissal.

### *Travelling with Foucault*

Said (1984b, 227) famously argued that theories travel, each having points of origin, a distance that is traversed, conditions that are confronted, and transformations that occur along the way. Said took Foucault both to America, institutionally, and to the Orient, theoretically. Between the two, Foucault's writings seeped into the emergent field of postcolonial studies and were incredibly influential. But theories also travel through time. As has been shown above, Foucault has travelled to places he never envisaged, confronted conditions he didn't expect, and has been over time, in cases, transformed beyond recognition. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (1999, 82) admitted that Said only took what he needed from Foucault (also see Gregory 2004b), resulting in an ambivalent privileging of authors and literature which *itself* contracted the scope for resistance. Indeed, it was Said's *lack* of a Foucauldian approach, rather than its presence, which decreased his attention on the non-representational spaces of the everyday in which the subaltern vocabulary of resistance is often located (see Smith 1994, 494). As such, the field of colonial discourse analysis, which played such a key role in establishing postcolonial studies, bore a bias towards the colonial mindset and its representation in textual accounts (see the emphasis on literary sources in, for instance, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989; Behdad 1994; Lowe 1991; Slemon 1989; Spurr 1993; Suleri 1992).

Driver (1992, 33) suggested that both Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and Said's *Orientalism* were similarly misread, downplaying the heterogeneity of modern discourses, the controversies and resistances they contain, and the specificity of discursive regimes. However, Young (2001, 407) suggested that it is Said's misrepresentation of Foucault that lays his work open to such misreadings. Young showed how Said came to interpret Foucault as dealing with textuality, estranging the Orientalist discourse from its material circumstances and welding it to representations. The effect of this reading, Young (2001, 389) argued, can be traced

through to the common criticisms of colonial discourse analysis. He categorized these as follows:

- Historicity: the generalization from a few literary texts that tend to be de-historicized and un-situated in non-discursive texts.
- Textuality: the treatment of texts as historical documents, without accompanying materialist historical inquiry or political understanding.
- Representation: if all truth is representation, what was mis-represented? How can the subaltern speak?
- Homogeneity and determinism: notions of discourse that override historical and geographical difference and problematize how people become subjects in such discourses.

Young argued that an analysis more loyal to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* would negate many of the criticisms outlined above. The archaeological model of discourse eschews a disembodied study of intertexts, of representations and interpretation, in favour of studying the practical emergence of knowledge at the interface of language and the material world. Discourse analysis should, therefore, be situated at the contact zone of materiality, bodies, objects and practices. As the network which links together statements, objects and subjects, discourses must be fragmented and heterogeneous, yet are unified by particular rules that operate on all individuals. However, these rules lead to multiplicity, not uniformity, of choice and action (as was still asserted in Foucault 1979, 100).

As such, Young argued that Foucault's conception of discourse is actually antithetical to postcolonial theories that posit a subjective voice of the colonized against an objective, colonizing discourse (also see Brennan 2000). Rather, discourses are unstable and cause the proliferation of subaltern discourses, whether as speaking from outside colonial discourses or mounting counter-discourses in direct confrontation (also see Terdiman 1985). Thus, a Foucauldian colonial discourse analysis would not be so vulnerable to the four criticisms outlined above, focused as it would be around using discourse to study colonial practice in successive administrative regimes (for such a place bound approach see Chatterjee 1995, 24). This brings colonial discourse analysis closer to work both on colonial governmentality and a material geographical analysis.

### *Re-materializing Postcolonial Geography*

Most geographers will take Young's arguments as reaffirmation, rather than revelation. Although not always referencing Foucault directly, but often in Foucauldian terminology, there is an entrenched tradition within the discipline that argues for a material grounding of postcolonial analyses (see Clayton 2004). Neil Smith (1994), in his review of *Culture and Imperialism*, showed that Said's newfound commitment to resistance was constrained within his textual reading of discourse, thus presenting the struggle for decolonization as a literary affair. Jane

Jacobs (1996, x) attempted to reorient the spatial emphasis in colonial discourse analysis from metaphor to 'real' geographies. While not actually dismissing textual representations as unreal, Jacobs traced imperial remains not just *in*, but also *through* and *about* space. It was at the contact zone of materiality and practices that Jacobs sought out the 'promiscuous geographies of dwelling in place' that activated imperial pasts in postcolonial presents. While Clive Barnett (1997) reassured those who feared a 'descent into discourse', Driver and Gilbert (1998, 14) repeated worries about the textual nature of postcolonial cultural geographical work and argued for an appreciation of the imperial inheritance in different types of urban space, whether architectural, spectacular or lived.

Reading Foucault's work on the political function of discourses, Alan Lester (1998, 2001, 2002) has been at the forefront of empirical research into not just the material practicalities of colonial rule but also the networking functions of international colonial discourses. His attention to the various sites in which power and knowledge were intertwined has led to a sophisticated understanding of grounded imperial power, with all the tensions and contestations that this involved. James Sidaway (2000, also see Sidaway, Bunnell and Yeoh 2003) repeated calls for a movement beyond discourse and representations to material practices, actual spaces and real politics, although these are all very much central to a Foucauldian understanding of discourse itself. More in line with Foucault's writings, Cole Harris (2004) has recently argued for an examination of the physical dispossession of the colonized rather than their misrepresentation.

Accompanying these calls for a more material approach, Cheryl McEwan (2003) has criticized the postcolonial tendency to separate discourses from lived experience, its failure to propose solutions, and its privileging of theory and culture over political and ethical responsibilities. In response, she suggested re-materializing postcolonialism, exploring the lived nature of postcoloniality, and advocated tactics for linking the textual with macro-issues. Conjoining the political-economic, the ethical, and the material should create opportunities in the present for, as Jacobs (2001) insisted, postcolonial study has a contemporary effect. Derek Gregory (2004a) has recently demonstrated the capacity of Foucauldian history and cultural geography to disrupt any complacency about the colonial past. In a series of accounts regarding the colonial historico-geographical present in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq, Gregory has traced the violent, physical and material manifestations of imaginary geographies bred through decades of colonial administration. These discourses are filled with the intentional voices of perpetrators, commentators and victims, and are scarred with the searing potential of counter-discourses to erupt in the space between the contradictory statements of neo-colonial discourses.

What is most surprising about Said's work after his rejection of Foucault is not only how much he retains his geographical emphasis, but the degree to which this emphasis becomes not just imaginary but also governmental. Corollaries develop not just with Young's Foucauldian colonial discourse analysis but also with a colonial application of Foucault's (1978 [2001]; 1979) later writings on governmentality and biopower. While *Orientalism* had acknowledged institutions of administration as

the third facet of orientalist discourse, Said (1984b, 219) later expressed his interest in Foucault's (1980, 77) writing on Geography; the control of territories, their demarcation and the study of armies, campaigns and territories (also see Gregory 1995). Here he also expressed the need to go beyond a purely linguistic discourse not just in the *Orientalism* tripartite of philology, ontology and institution, but also to the colonial bureaucracy and its virtual power of life and death over the Orient.

This movement was continued in *Culture and Imperialism*, despite his stubborn textualism (however, for some instances of Said grounding texts in material context see Gregory 1995, 453). Interest was expressed in the 'actual geographic underpinnings' beneath social space and the ways in which geographical projections make possible the construction of knowledge (Said 1993, 93). Physical transformations were noted, ranging from ecological imperialism and urban reconstruction down to the micro-physics of organizing everyday interaction (1993, 132). But the geographical element was also essential to anti-imperialism, at first through imagining the recovery of loss, and later the recovery of territory (1993, 271). This was part of Said's ongoing rethinking of the 'struggle over geography' (Said in Said et al. 1994, 21), which was affirmed in his later comments on memory and geography (Said 2000b). Here orientalism itself was stressed to be about the mapping, conquest and annexation of densely inhabited, lived-in places, as part of an unending struggle over territory and memory.

By the late 1990s Said was advocating a form of geographical research that explored the diverse range of governmental tactics used to order space and the various different forms of memory production that negotiated this space. Such writings cannot be considered outside of his committed involvement with the Palestinian cause, which did not always feature in his theoretical work (see Gregory 1995; Said 2000b). The Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) also produced theoretically sophisticated material that remained oriented around the present. Said (1988) had praised the SSG under their editor Ranajit Guha, for their innovative archival work and for searching out non-elite histories not only in elite writings but also in mundane, everyday texts. He later acknowledged this level of research as, perhaps, more important than his preferred level of representations:

Now there is of course a subcultural tradition, for example, as Guha and others have shown, a whole range of colonial writing which is not artistic but is administrative, is investigative, is reportorial, has to do with conditions on the ground, has to do with interactions depending on the native informant. All that exists, there is no question of that. I was trying to adumbrate, perhaps a less important, but to my way of thinking, a larger picture of a certain kind of stability. (Said 2002, 7)

### **Subaltern Studies: From Gramsci to Governmentality**

Ranjit Guha (1982) established the Subaltern Studies publication series in an attempt to grant credit and autonomy to the peasant classes of India as a politicized, active section of the population; the non-elite. While the Gramscian notion of the

subaltern would later be extended from the military or class concept to that of race, sexuality, caste or language, the emphasis remained on detailing the existence of action that could not be teleologized into a colonial, nationalist, or Marxist narrative. In over 20 years the literature by Subaltern Studies authors has converged with certain postcolonial themes, with an increasing use of Said but a decline from heavily Marxist origins to a 'spirit of Marx' (Chaturvedi 2000, vii) in later work.

### *The Spirit of Foucault*

Partha Chatterjee has consistently worked to bring the SSG in line with Foucault's and Said's writings. While his initial contribution (Chatterjee 1983) dealt with the transition from feudalism to capitalism and Marx's theories on property, this was presented as an analysis of 'modes of power' and ended with an avocation of Foucault's capillary and embodied understanding of power relations. However, marking the qualified application of western theories to India that would characterize the SSGs work, Chatterjee asserted that modern power in the 'Third World' was combined with older modes of control and different state formations to those in Europe (for a reaffirmation of this view see Chatterjee 1995, 8).

Having first read Said in 1980 (Chatterjee 1992, 194), Chatterjee (1984) applied his theories to India in claiming that nationalists operated within orientalist discourses and with orientalist stereotypes *themselves*. As such, the representational structure of nationalist thinking corresponded at times to the structure of power it tried to repudiate. David Arnold's work on the Madras police force applied Foucault's (1977) work to India, looking at the removal of social intermediaries, the surveillance and discipline of the force itself, and political criticism of the police as anti-national during the non-cooperation movement (Arnold 1984). Later work on anti-plague measures showed that attempts to initiate mass state intervention between the 1890s and 1930s was met with a hostile response, not passivity or docility (Arnold, 1987). This reaction was against the latent claim for increased power over the body, as also expressed in dictates on widow immolation, whipping and medicine. Arnold's (1994) later work also included an investigation of colonial prisons as lived spaces of resistance but also as abstract spaces for the collection of knowledge about Indian bodies.

This usage of Foucault was, I would suggest, forestalled and redirected by a shift that took place in the mid-1980s. This marked a turn to 'discourse' as it was increasingly being defined by postcolonial studies, rather than being akin to Foucault's original notion. The rupture was triggered by a debate over the epistemological validity of the subaltern as an autonomous subject of history. Spivak (1985, 338) argued that the attempt to discover or establish a peasant or subaltern consciousness was positivistic, denoting a single, underlying consciousness. In the place of this romantic quest should be, she claimed, a charting of the subaltern-effect, the knotting of strands, whether political, economic, historical, or linguistic, that gave the effect of the operating subject. The fact that a strategically essentialist concept of the subject might be necessary to tie this knot was accepted as a valid risk

for the political interest of the SSG project. This argument was affirmed by Rosalind O'Hanlon (1988) who criticized the retention of a humanist subject alongside the growing use of anti-humanist, post-structuralist theory. In 1988 Guha's retirement signalled the increase of post-modern theory within the group and a turn to the discursive construction of the subaltern(-effect).<sup>4</sup>

However, the 'discourse' used here was as much influenced by Spivak's readings of Derrida than that of Foucault. Spivak (1985, 330) had defined the SSG project as being about confrontation and change, but this was a change in sign-systems that classified, for example, crime as insurgency. These were 'discursive displacements' that charted people or events as political signifiers. As such, the SSG was claimed to examine the 'socius' as a sign-chain in which action marked a breaking of this chain. However, in this approach all attempts at displacement must be failures due to the breadth of colonial organization and the failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to politicize the peasantry. The focus from the fourth *Subaltern Studies* volume (1985) thus shifted to analyzing the difference of the subaltern that emerged within elite discourses (Prakash 1994). Chatterjee (1986), for example, showed how the agency of the common people was appropriated by the nationalist elite, leaving them as silenced fragments of a strengthening nation (Chatterjee 1993). This historiographical move *did* produce an innovative reading of sources for subaltern traces and stereotypes, yet the end result that was sought was one of failure. The textualism and political pessimism that resulted from such an approach has recently been challenged, but this has been within an understanding that subaltern studies be framed as a form of postcolonial criticism.

Gyan Prakash (1990) situated subaltern studies as a post-foundational history. He claimed it had overcome the depictions of India in orientalist texts as passive and separate, and in nationalist texts as autonomous and essential. He also criticized the essentialist notions of anthropology and area studies, along with the structural explanations of Marxist and social historians, much to the ire of O'Hanlon and Washbrook (1992). Against these traditions, and inline with Said's call to reject, not reverse, colonial categories, the SSGs charting of multiple and changing subject positions was claimed to be fully post-foundational, and postcolonial (Prakash 1994).

The SSG has come under constant and sustained attack, from within India and without (Chaturvedi 2000). Perhaps one of the most provocative critiques came from Sumit Sarkar (1996 [2000]), a former contributor to the series and member of the editorial team. Sarkar mourned the decline in the study of underprivileged groups and the attendant increase in studying the power-knowledge relationships of colonialism, which often inserted religious community as the consciousness of the non-West. Sarkar criticized Chatterjee for depriving both the masses *and* the

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4 This shift can also be attributed to various personal factors. For instance, many of the SSG members acquired familial and institutional commitments that precluded long research trips to the archive in favour of textual analysis, while the previous approach had already occupied some contributors for a decade (Dipesh Chakrabarty, personal communication).



intelligentsia of agency, the latter of whom were just subjects within a derivative discourse of European nationalism and orientalism (for comments on Chatterjee's pessimistic view of the fate of women in the nationalist movement see Legg 2003). While reviewers had explained any essentialism within the SSG as residual Marxism, Sarkar stressed the ability of socio-economic analysis to fracture essential notions of identity. However, the Subaltern Studies authors have increasingly been returning to Foucault's work, especially that on government, to seek new ways of framing and searching for subaltern agency. Again, this return to the material and biopolitical has been pre-empted by a seam of postcolonial geographical research.

### *Spaces of Biopower*

Apart from the theoretical calls to re-materialize, geographers have specialized in empirical research that has reinforced postcolonial development and elaboration of Foucault's theories. For instance, Jonathan Crush (1994) combined theories of panopticism with those of capitalist work-regimes to analyze South African mine compounds. Here architecture was used to increase visibility throughout the delimited space, although cultural forms of resistance proliferated in response through, for example, the production of liquor, hyper-masculine behaviour or the smuggling of banned medicines. James Duncan (2002) has, similarly, examined the attempted production of abstract space and bodies in Ceylonese coffee plantations. However, the workers engaged not only in resistance through insubordination or desertion, but also through exploiting the cracks in abstract space; minimalizing output, feigning sickness, and forging networks of counter-surveillance to indicate when the colonial gaze is untrained on the workers. Jennifer Robinson (2000) also focused on the embodied gaze, in the case of housing managers in 1930s South Africa. Moving away from the masculine vocabulary of many accounts of panopticism, Robinson showed that the surveying gaze took the form of friendly, female enquiry, forging links over racial boundaries. Indeed, in non-institutional cases the form of power seemed more liberal, ruling from a distance and through the powers of freedom.

Foucault's writings on governmentality have proven appealing to geographers for a variety of reasons. Firstly, they present an analytical programme for investigating modern regimes of government (Foucault 1978 [2001]). This may be through the individual categories of episteme, identity, visibility, techne and ethos (Dean 1999; Rose 1996), or through looking across these categories for evidence of regime change (Legg 2006b; Watts 2003). Secondly, the literature refers to a mode of power that has overcome, though retains features of, the power regimes of sovereignty and discipline with that of regulatory government. Regulation involves gathering information about people and territories, calculating and classifying this knowledge, and exerting power from a distance to normalize and stabilize a specific population.

The first task is what increasingly attracted the attention of Said, the geographies of which have been investigated by Matthew Hannah. In the 1870s the United States government sought to increase its knowledge concerning the Sioux Native American population through a social cycle of control concerning observation, judgement and



enforcement (Hannah 1993). Attempts to fix the Sioux in one place only increased governmental awareness of how little information they had about these people and how problematic census taking would be. The census was one of the main means of establishing power-knowledge grids over opaque territories. Hannah's (2000) study of the extension of population assessments across the United States illustrates how closely the European colonizing nations shared techniques with internally colonizing postcolonial states.

In the case of British Columbia, Daniel Clayton (2000) has examined the processes of cultural interaction, modes of representation and local power relations during Western encounters with the natives between the 1770s and 1840s. Clayton examines just how Foucault's Eurocentric ideas can map onto peripheral areas through a genealogical tracing of relations through three phases of encounter structured by relations of science, profit, and imperial geopolitics. Following Clayton's work, Cole Harris (2004) has shown how natives were allocated reservation spaces, thus allowing development and reorganization outside these areas. While initial dispossession rested on the physical violence of the state as encouraged by capitalist interests, the legitimization of the scheme was cultural while the actual management of the dispossessed was disciplinary, combining the full spectrum of governmental tactics. Bruce Braun (2000) has also used the Canadian context to draw out the links between the physical sciences and the governmentality of the Victorian state.

While at times physically violent or overbearingly disciplinary, colonial and postcolonial states also sought to govern, which was the eventual outcome of many of the processes outlined above. Robinson (1997) has shown that apartheid in South Africa lasted so long because it manipulated populations through 'locations' that segregated different sub-groups who could be governed through their representatives. These biopolitical manipulations sought to normalize populations in terms of their behaviour while keeping them in visible and controllable places. However, the identity assumptions of biopolitical regimes in colonial contexts often fit neither into Foucault's assumptions about modern liberalism, or the genocidal extremes of the Nazi or Stalinist state. Rather, as Gregory (1998, 85–86) suggested, colonized people were often treated as the objects, not subjects, of rule in systems less individualizing than those of Europe (also see Chatterjee 1995, 8, and Vaughan 1991). This led to calculations that often prioritized cost and political threat over welfare, although such calculations were perfect material for critiques not just of colonial violence or intrusion, but of their active mismanagement (Legg 2006a; 2007).

As Stoler argued, sexual politics were central to the colonial state and marked the hub of 'biopower', the dovetailing of discipline and government. Exploring these intersections, Mike Kesby (1999) has used Foucault's writings on sexuality to explore corporeal demarcations of patriarchal space in rural Zimbabwe that influenced who the colonial authorities negotiated with and how. Philip Howell (2004a) has also argued that Foucault can be used in the colonies in terms of his work on biopower, normalization and spatial ordering. All these elements come together in his investigation of the regulation of prostitution in colonial Hong Kong. Here he makes clear that the European models based on self-disciplining subjects were not

applicable, and gave way to the racial objectification and geographical segregation of a reluctantly expansive state (also see Howell 2004b). These themes of discipline, biopolitics, and government have informed a range of work by authors associated with the SSG and others working on South Asia.

### *Subaltern Negotiations of Governmental Spaces*

David Arnold consolidated his work on colonial biopolitics with his *Colonizing the Body* (Arnold 1993), which explored the expansion of European medical practices, their cautious reception by indigenous populations, and how they were signified as representing more than simple health practice. David Scott (1995) has investigated 'colonial governmentality' as theory and practice in Ceylon/Sri Lanka. Scott stressed the need to examine the targets of rule, how they are conceived and the means used to conduct them through space, while simultaneously considered the effects of race and religion on these European developed technologies of control.

The most thorough application to date of the colonial governmentality approach has been provided by Gyan Prakash (1999). Prakash analyzed scientific structures and regulations as 'civilizing' strategies that targeted the population, yet in the process opened up a sphere of political activity in which nationalists could challenge the government. These processes were traced across a variety of geographical scales, from the institutions of the museum and Asiatic Society to the body, civic works and the imagination of the nation itself. Satish Deshpande (2000) has also adapted Foucault's work to the Indian nation, analyzing aspirational Hindu communalism as a heterotopia that attempts to mediate the utopic and the real.

The scope of practices within the framework of governmentality proportionally increases the scope across which one can look for resistance. This can operate from the level of societal or economic processes to the level of local technologies and bodies. Spivak (2000) has bridged the international and corporeal in suggesting that the 'new subaltern' is positioned by organizations like the World Bank or multinational corporations as intellectual property whether in terms of agri- or herbicultural knowledge. Dipesh Chakrabarty and Partha Chatterjee have, however, looked instead to how governmental categories are lived and negotiated by subaltern populations.

Chakrabarty (2002), in his book *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, has investigated the governmental roots of modern ethnicity. Noting how the notions of race explicated by Foucault and Stoler tend to be viewed in India as external, Chakrabarty traces the links between internal views of community and caste and the processes of ethnicity and government. The governmentality work is used to examine the structuring of the colonial Indian political imagination and the founding of categories that outlived the administration and contained the seeds of ethnic violence.

Chatterjee (2004) has produced a sophisticated account of the negotiation of population politics by the governed themselves. Here, politics is located not just as the outcome of the universal ideals of civic nationalism, but also as the cultural

uptake of the categories mobilized by governmental rationalities. Against his earlier pessimism, Chatterjee holds up hope against governmental technologies merely being instruments of class rule in a global capitalist order. He claims that '(b)y seeking to find real ethical spaces for their operation in heterogeneous time, the incipient resistances to that order may succeed in inventing new terms of political justice' (Chatterjee 2004, 23). The argument is that most people in India today have tenuous rights and are not part of the elite civil society. This is despite still being within the government's reach through policies that target the 'political society' of the subaltern. Chatterjee suggested these tactics emerged in the 1980s, despite hinting at their colonial origins in an earlier paper (Chatterjee 2001, 175). Within this space, population groups can claim the rights of a community and a voice that arises from the *violation* of property laws and civic regulations that are so central to governmental order. Mediators are employed to bargain with the state for concessions that *are* delivered due to the sub-population's rights, not as citizens, but through their existence as living beings.

Although Chatterjee does not use these terms, I would suggest the subaltern he targets is one that precociously straddles the positions of *zoe* (the simple fact of living) and of *bios* (normalized behaviour and individual rights). Giorgio Agamben (1998) has drawn on Foucault's writings to trace the genealogy of *homo sacer*, the subject so stripped of rights that he (*sic*, in Agamben's gendered language) can be sacrificed without penalty; s/he is bare life. Agamben traces the states of exception in which *homo sacer* have been produced, from ancient Rome to Auschwitz, which Derek Gregory (2004a) extends to Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan. However, in going on to claim the camp as the *nomos* of modernity, surely Agamben conforms to the pessimism and determinism of which Foucault has been criticized? What other reactions could there be to the state of exception? What if the subjects so paraded there are re-embraced, their exposition demanding the restitution of rights in a state of reception? Chatterjee sees hope in the politics of objectification. The Indian Emergency of the 1970s represented an exceptional biopolitical stripping of the urban poor, denying them the right to biologically reproduce through sterilization. However, the demolitions and deaths at Delhi's Turkman Gate, Chatterjee (2004, 135) reminds us, led to a nationwide outcry, juridical protection for the poor, and contributed to the downfall of Indira Gandhi's government.

In a cross-disciplinary collaboration, Corbridge, Williams, Srivastava and Véron (2005) have brought detail to the politics Chatterjee describes, while carrying his hope against objectification through to an empirical study. They do this through explaining in detail how the rural subaltern see, and negotiate, the state. Taking Foucault's assertion that governmental techniques *make* the state as much as they are deployed by it, Corbridge et al. demonstrate how marginal populations meet the state, whether embodied in administrators or the policy initiatives of 'political society'. Development policies in the 1990s increasingly came to stress 'participation' as a means of conducting conduct and facilitating self-help that drew the state into new forms of personal contacts with its population. Here it had to negotiate local power networks, misunderstandings, authority figures, corruption, feedback and

mobilized resistance from local mediators. The case studies show that most people actually experience a limited and capricious state and demand greater assurances and information before engaging with the policies it suggested. This approach rightly posits resistance and agency as central to governmental rationalities that must forge spaces of connection between the central state and marginal populations whilst remaining sensitive to the culture and politics of the locale. It is within such governmental negotiations of the economic, biopolitical and the social that current research is applying Foucauldian theory to the historically conditioned yet urgently contemporary moments of the postcolonial.

## **Conclusions**

Current trends in postcolonial research, both within and without the geographical discipline, are pushing scale-sensitive examinations of material places that open up spaces to consider the activities of the subjectivized and the subaltern. At the non-representational level of the lived it is possible to trace discourses as Foucault described them; as the material and corporeal production of knowledge and practice. As Said suggested in his later work, and his political activism throughout his life, this necessitates an examination of postcolonial work on the ground as well as in imaginary geographies. While his turn to resistance remained locked at the representational level, the Subaltern Studies literature struggled to locate this resistance on the ground, while simultaneously looking at the discursive production of the oppressed. Foucault's (1975–76 [2003]) *Society Must be Defended* lectures ended with a discussion of biopolitics after dwelling on race, but actually began with lectures on subjugated knowledges and the power of memory. As he urged towards the end of his life, no doubt in reaction to accusations of his political pessimism, resistance and local configuration had to be acknowledged in all power relations. It is at this level of realization and mobilization that geographical research on the postcolonial has excelled. If, as Chakrabarty suggests, Europe remains the sovereign subject of much postcolonial history, historiographical regicide must be worked towards through a combination of the tactics described above: a sensitive and cosmopolitan scholarly practice; a geography that is attuned to material as well as textual power relations; research of compatible yet different modes of power at a variety of scales; and an awareness of the agency and resistance of the individuals that may be the target government, capitalist, nationalist or communal regimes, but are never wholly constituted by them.

## **Acknowledgements**

This chapter was written as part of a Junior Research Fellowship at Homerton College, Cambridge. Many thanks for their support and comments go to Dan Clayton, Stuart Corbridge, Jim Duncan, Derek Gregory, Gerry Kearns, Phil Howell, Miles Ogborn,

and Si Reid-Henry. Thanks also go to Gyan Prakash and Dipesh Chakrabarty for their email correspondence. All mistakes are, of course, my own.

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