

Race and the Education of Desire

FOUCAULT'S HISTORY OF SEXUALITY

AND THE COLONIAL ORDER OF THINGS

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VI

THE EDUCATION OF DESIRE AND

THE REPRESSIVE HYPOTHESIS

One should not think that desire is repressed, for the simple reason that the law is what constitutes desire and the lack on which it is predicated. Where there is desire, the power relation is already present; an illusion, then to denounce this relation for a repression exerted after the event; but vanity as well, to go questing after a desire that is beyond the reach of power. (HS:81)

Judith Butler has characterized volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality* as a history of western desire, but I am not sure this is the case.¹ In fact desire is one of the most elusive concepts in the book, the shibboleth that Foucault discards and disclaims. For Foucault, there is no “original” desire that juridical law must respond to and repress, as for Freud. On the contrary, desire follows from, and is generated out of, the law, out of the power-laden discourses of sexuality where it is animated and addressed.² Contra Freud’s contention that “civilization is built up upon a renunciation of

1. See Judith Butler’s *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia UP, 1987) for an informed and accessible treatment of the philosophical debate on desire and Foucault’s position within it. See especially 186–229 for her helpful discussion of the commonalities and differences in approaches to desire by Lacan, Deleuze, Derrida and Foucault, a subject I do not broach here.

2. Judith Butler puts Foucault’s position this way:

The law that we expect to repress some set of desires which could be said to exist prior to law succeeds rather in naming, delimiting and thereby, giving social meaning and possibility to precisely those desires it intended to eradicate. (*Subjects* 218)

Other attempts to define what is distinctive about Foucault’s notion of desire offer only a sparse roadmap to it. See, for example, Scott Lash, “Genealogy and the Body: Foucault/Deleuze/Nietzsche,” *Theory, Culture, Society* 2.2 (1984): 1–17 whose discussion of desire centers more on Deleuze and Guattari, than Foucault.

instinct," Foucault took as his task specification of the historical moment in the mid-nineteenth century when "instinct" emerged into discourse, analysis of the cultural production of the notion of "sexual desire" as an index of individual and collective identity.³ Since the "truth" of our sexual desire (the premise that we can know ourselves if we know that truth of that primal sexual instinct hidden within us) is not a starting point for Foucault, knowledge of our "true desires" cannot be a condition of critique. It must be a historically constituted *object* of it.⁴ Foucault does not dismiss Freudian models all together, but, as John Rajchman notes, assumes a "kind of practical and historical doubt about their use . . . with the suggestion that there may be more to the historical determination of sexual desire than the prevention of our capacity to publicly formulate it."⁵

The paradox of volume 1, however, is that while sexuality inscribes desire in discourse, Foucault's discussion of the discourses and technologies of sex says little about what sorts of desires are produced in the nineteenth century and what people do with them.⁶ We know that the confessional apparatus of "medical exams, psychiatric investigations, pedagogical reports, and family controls" were mechanisms of both pleasure and power, but it is left for us to examine in particular political contexts, how that pleasure is distributed, how desire is structurally moti-

3. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 1961) 45. For Foucault, "instinct" emerged as a medical object in the 1840s (see *Power/Knowledge* 221).

4. John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia, 1985) 91.

5. Rajchman, *Michel Foucault* 91

6. In the introduction to *The Uses of Pleasure* (1985), volume II of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault explains the shift in his analytic trajectory and why he will "recenter [his] entire study on the genealogy of the desiring man." While this recentering on "the hermeneutics of the self" and a "general history of the 'techniques of the self'" is described as a new venture, there is already strong evidence of this concern in volume one. There the *dispositif* of sexuality forms the basis on which the cultivation of the [bourgeois] self is predicated, evinced in a bourgeois concern for governing and conveying how to live. A focus on "the cultivation of the self" is already there: the shift is in the larger frame in which Foucault historicizes that phenomenon. In volume I, Foucault identified "the cultivation of [the bourgeois]body" as crucial to the bourgeoisie's dominance (HS:125). In volume II, the nineteenth-century management of "how to live," described in the last of his 1976 Collège de France lectures, provides the analytic focus for a broader enquiry, not confined to nineteenth-century bourgeois culture. It is reformulated as the key to a deeper historical genealogy and addresses another agenda. What is not set out in volume one is a "history of desiring man" (UP:6).

vated, what specific “spirals” of pleasure and power are displayed (HS:45).⁷ Foucault presents his project as one that will “define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world” (HS:11). But once we turn to question the distributions of desires, to “discover who does the speaking” in the geopolitical mapping of desiring subjects and desired objects, “our part of the world” becomes more than an innocuous convention, but a porous and problematic boundary to sustain. For that boundary itself, as we know, took as much discursive and political energy to produce as that which bound sex to power, and the “truth” of identity to sex.⁸

If the founding premise of Foucault’s analysis is to trace how sexual desire is incited by regulatory discourses, one might expect colonial studies, so influenced by him, to have embraced more of his critique than it has actually done. We have looked more to the regulation and release of desire than to its manufacture. We have hardly even registered the fact that the writing of colonial history has often been predicated on just the assumption that Foucault attacked; the premise that colonial power relations can be accounted for and explained as a sublimated expression of repressed desires in the West, of desires that resurface in moralizing missions, myths

7. Foucault’s notion of power shared with, and was clearly influenced by, Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of desire as embodying productive and generative properties (as opposed to Freud and Lacan’s psychoanalytic emphasis on “lack”) and it was Foucault who wrote the laudatory preface to *Anti-Oedipus*. But Deleuze and Guattari’s approach influenced Foucault’s conception of power more than his treatment of desire. For *La volonté du savoir* is not about what desire produces but what produces desire, i.e. those regulatory discourses of sexuality that have made us believe that true knowledge of ourselves is accessible if we know our “inner sexual drives.” Despite this debt, there were differences. According to Butler, Deleuze and Guattari, unlike Foucault, retained a “pre-cultural notion of ‘true desire,’” thereby undermining their historicization of it (1990: 215, 219). Didier Eribon too, who otherwise describes Lacan and Foucault’s pre-1976 relationship as one more of “affinity” than influence, holds that Foucault’s formulation of the repressive hypothesis “targeted” *Anti-Oedipus*, Lacanian psychoanalysis and represented a clear break with Lacan. Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault et ses contemporains* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 249, 257.

8. Others have also noted the lack of an analysis of desire in volume I. Baudrillard, for very different reasons, has argued that “. . . in Foucault power takes the place of desire. It is there in . . . a network, rhizome, a contiguity diffracted ad infinitum. That is why there is no desire in Foucault: its place is already taken.” Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault* (New York: Semiotext, 1977) 17–18.

of the “wild woman,” in a romance with the rural “primitive,” or in other more violent, virile, substitute form.

In colonial historiography, questions of desire often occupy a curious place. While the regulation of sexuality has come center stage, Foucault's reworking of the repressive hypothesis and thus the cultural production of desire has not. Although sexual desire, as expressed, repressed, made illicit, misdirected, inherited, and otherwise controlled has underwritten European folk theories of race from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, desire is often suspended as a pre-cultural instinct to which social controls are applied, a *deus ex machina*, given and unexplained. Much mainstream colonial history has preceded not from a Foucauldian premise that desire is a social construct, and sex a nineteenth-century invention, but from an implicitly Freudian one.⁹ While Freudian language has certainly permeated other branches of history and other disciplines, the specific and varied invocations of Freudian models in colonial studies—and the effects of their often silent presence—have neither been fully acknowledged nor explored.¹⁰

The relationship between Freudian models and Foucauldian critiques in the writing of colonial history has been a more complicated relationship than one might expect. Some analytic debts have been more quickly acknowledged than others. But saying “yes” to Foucault has not always meant saying “no” to Freud, not even for Foucault himself. Despite Foucault's rejection of the repressive hypothesis, there are surprising ways

9. This is not to suggest that the notion of “sexual instinct” first appeared with Freud. On the contrary, representations of African sexuality at least from the 1500's attributed primal lust, licentious instincts, unbridled sexual appetite and a propensity for “Venery” to the racialized Other long before Freud theorized the place of the libido in the workings of the human unconscious. See, for example, Karen Newman, “‘And Wash the Ethiop White’: Feminist and the Monstrous in *Othello*,” *Shakespeare Reproduced*, eds. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor (New York: Methuen, 1987). Sander Gilman argues that what Freud did was to treat those sexual and mental pathologies, long associated with the Jew and the Black, not as racial attributes but as consequences of civilization itself. See Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993). What would be interesting to explore further is how these earlier discourses on racialized lust were, malgré Freud, recuperated in a nineteenth-century racial discourse that drew on Freud to lend added credence to arguments that the racialized Other was driven by sexual instincts that required a civilizing imperial mission to control and contain.

10. For a query into the theoretical bases for applying Freud to historical analysis see Dominick LaCapra's essay “History and Psychoanalysis,” *Soundings in Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1989) 30–66.

in which their projects can and do converge. For Freud, sexual desire is a cause; for Foucault, an effect. Freud accounts for the psychological aetiology of perversions, Foucault looks to the cultural production and historical specificity of the notions of sexual pathology and perversion themselves. The differences are striking but so are some of the points on which they are complementary, if not the same. Both were concerned with boundary formation, with the “internal enemy” within. For Freud, cultural conventions arise out of the psychological contortions of the individual at war with her or his own subliminal desires. As Julia Kristeva writes, “Freud does not speak of foreigners: he teaches us how to detect foreignness in ourselves.”¹¹ For Foucault, the cultural conventions of racism emerge out of social bodies at war with themselves. Thus when Michael Rogin, in an essay on liberal society and the Indian question in U.S. history, argues that attitudes to native Americans were personalized and conceived as a “defense of the [American] self”—what Foucault would call a defense of society against itself—it is Freud he draws on, but Foucault who might have subscribed to Rogin’s language of “defense” as well.¹² Or inversely, we might look to Edward Said’s supremely Foucauldian analysis of Orientalist discourse and Western domination where Freud’s notion of projection, of the Orient as the West’s “surrogate self” is a crucial but buried part of his argument.

This chapter addresses two problems: the ways in which the language of Freud has entrenched itself in the general field of colonial studies, and the tangled coexistence of Freud and Foucault more specifically in analyses of colonial racism. If Foucault has led us to the power of discourse, it is Freud that has, albeit indirectly, turned us toward the power of fantasy, to imagined terror, to perceived assaults on the European self that made up the anxious and ambivalent world in which European colonials lived.¹³ It is Freud after all, via Fanon, who as Homi Bhabha writes, located how “the deep fear of the Black figured in the psychic trembling of Western

11. Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991) 191.

12. Michael Rogin, “Liberal Society and the Indian Question,” *Politics and Society* (May 1971): 269–312 esp. 284.

13. Clearly not all students of colonialism (myself included) who have attended to European colonials’ anxieties in the face of their illegitimate rule are well versed in or intended to draw on Freud’s arguments. My point is to acknowledge how much a Freudian, and more general psychologically oriented assessment of motivation, have underwritten what are ostensibly very different sorts of economic, political and sociological analyses.

sexuality.”¹⁴ Fanon was not alone. Octavio Mannoni, Albert Memmi, and Ashis Nandy have each drawn on a Freudian psychoanalytics to provide a *contre-histoire* of colonialism, a way to access the subjugated knowledges and psychology of domination of colonized Man (*sic*). I am not proposing that the task in colonial studies is to abandon Freudian concepts, but only the unreflexive use of them. We need to be aware of the varied analytic work we expect them to do, to distinguish, for example, when the concepts of repression, displacement, identification and projection that saturate so much of colonial historiography serve to clarify historical processes of empire—or, more frequently, are invoked to substitute for an analysis of historical depth.¹⁵

Subjecting the use of Freudian models to scrutiny requires doing so of Foucault’s as well. Does embracing Foucault’s statement that “sexuality is a dense transfer of power,” charged with “instrumentality” run the risk of reproducing the very terms of colonial discourse itself, where everything and anything can be reduced to sex? Is Baudrillard’s snipe that Foucault merely replaced one fiction of *homo economicus* with another, that of *homo sexualis*, valid?¹⁶ And what is precluded by an economy of sex in which the genealogy of desiring subjects is only desiring men? While it may be in much colonial discourse, that issues of sexuality were often metonymic of a wider set of relations, and sex was invariably about power, power was not always about sex. In these colonial contexts, discourses of sexuality often glossed, colonized, appropriated, and erased a more complicated range of longings and sentiments that, boiled down to sex, were made palatable as they were served up for immediate consumption.

There is overwhelming evidence that much colonial discourse, as Foucault’s argument would suggest, has been framed by a search for the “truth” of the European bourgeois self through sex. This is not surprising. What is disturbing is that colonial historiography has inadvertently em-

14. See Homi Bhabha’s injunction to re-engage Fanon and his Freudian sensibilities in “Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition,” *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia UP, 1994) 112–23 (originally published in 1986 as a Foreword to the republication of *Black Skin, White Masks*).

15. Among the best of the numerous recent re-engagements with Freud via Fanon, see Diana Fuss’ critique of Fanon’s treatment of interracial rape, femininity and homosexuality in “Interior Colonies: Frantz Fanon and the Politics of Identification,” *Critical Crossings*, eds. Judith Butler and Biddy Martin, spec. issue of *Diacritics* 24.2–3 (Spring/Fall, 1994): 20–42.

16. Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault* (New York: Semiotext, 1977) 30.

braced this notion of “truth” as well. Students of colonialism have often taken their readings of European sexual conduct in the colonies from colonial scripts themselves. Freudian notions of a repressed, sublimated and projected sexual impulse are invoked to explain political projects in instinctual psychosocial terms. In one version, desire is a basic biological drive, restricted and repressed by a “civilization” that forces our sublimation of it. Thus George Fredrickson in his history of white supremacy in the U.S. and South Africa suggests that Elizabethan repression of English sexuality may have incited the “secret or subliminal attractions” that were “projected onto Africans.”¹⁷ Gann and Duignan in their work on colonial Africa write that British imperial expansion was possibly “a sublimation or alternative to sex.”¹⁸

If the repressive hypothesis is unacknowledged for these authors, it is not for others. Octavio Mannoni’s postwar study of French-Malagasy colonial relations was centrally figured around the psychological coordinates and political consequences of European repression.¹⁹ Fanon too explicitly called on psychoanalytic theory to explain racism as the projection of the white man’s desires onto the Negro, where “the white man behaves ‘as if’ the Negro really had them.”²⁰ Gilberto Freyre is perhaps most notorious for having attributed varied manifestations of colonial racial prejudice to the differences between the active libidos of the Portuguese, to the fact

17. George Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981) 100.

18. L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of British Africa, 1870–1914* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1978) 240. As they explain:

Life overseas, away from family and friends, may have presented more opportunities or pressures to be promiscuous, officials had great power over the people they ruled, and black flesh may have seemed attractive merely because it was forbidden or was thought to be more ‘natural.’

19. Octavio Mannoni, *Prospero et Caliban: Psychologie de la Colonisation* (Paris: Seuil, 1950). Fanon’s scathing assault in *Black Skin, White Masks* (83–108) on Mannoni’s misguided analysis of the “so-called dependency complex of colonized people” coupled with Mannoni’s gross generalizations about the roots of Malagasy national character both conspired to relegate him to the uncited and unworthy of critical review. Nevertheless, it is Mannoni who worked closely with Lacan whose revisions of Freud have in turn figured so prominently in some postcolonial theory. Shirley Turkel notes that Octavio and Maud Mannoni were considered among “the great barons,” the “old guard of the Lacanian clinical tradition” and among “Lacan’s loyal followers since the schism of 1953.” See Shirley Turkel, *Psychoanalytic Politics: Jacques Lacan and Freud’s French Revolution* (New York: Guilford Press, 1992) 259.

20. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

that they were so “highly sexed,” in contrast to the more sexually conservative Anglo-Saxons.²¹ According to Winthrop Jordan, Englishmen in the Renaissance projected onto the African “libidinal man” what “they could not speak of in themselves.” Richard Drinnon in *Facing West*, a study of the metaphysics of Indian-hating and empire-building in U.S. history takes a systemic “repression” as the underlying theme of racial violence.²² So too did George Rawick, who compared the Englishman’s meeting with the West African to that of a “reformed sinner” who creates “a pornography of his former life.”²³ By Rawick’s account, this “great act of repression” left the Englishman identifying with “those who live as he once did or as he still consciously desires to live.”²⁴

For both Rawick and Jordan, racism emerged out of the unconscious realization by the English not that Africans were so different, but that they were frighteningly the same.²⁵ As Jordan put it, there was an

irreconcilable conflict between desire and aversion for interracial sexual union . . . [It] rested on the bedrock fact that white men perceived Negroes as being both *alike and different* from themselves . . . Without perceptions of similarity, no desire and no widespread gratification was possible.²⁶

For Jordan, some form of sexual desire is a given, while for Rawick, there is a hint that other motivating desires, besides those sexual, may have been at issue as well. David Roediger takes up just that theme in *The Wages of Whiteness* to specify the sort of nostalgic longings that racist “projections” entailed. He contends that the consensus achieved by a heterogeneous white working class in the nineteenth-century U.S. rested on an idea of blackness that embodied “the preindustrial past that they scorned and

21. Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves* (New York: Knopf, 1946) 94.

22. Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1980). Although published in 1980, most of Drinnon’s study was written in the mid 1970s just before *The History of Sexuality* appeared. Drinnon acknowledges his debt to Foucault’s notion of a “carceral” society, but remains firmly committed to Freud’s repressive hypothesis (xv–xvi).

23. George Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972) 132.

24. Rawick, *American Slave* 132.

25. Rawick, *American Slave* 133.

26. Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black* (New York: Norton, 1968) 137–38.

missed.”²⁷ In Roediger’s nuanced analysis, it is not sexual license that is longed for, nor sexual desire that is repressed, but desire in other forms, “longing for a rural past and the need to adapt to the urban present” of industrial discipline.²⁸

In each of these versions of the repressive hypothesis, some combination of the Freudian notions of sublimated and projected desire is offered to account for racism and Europe’s imperial expansion. Racism is treated as a historical construct, but repression of instinct remains the engine. The libidinal qualities imputed to the Other are understood as a product of racist fears, but sexual desire itself remains biologically driven, assumed, and unexplained. The underlying assumption is, as Martha Vicinus once so aptly called it, a “hydraulic model of sexuality” where “sex is always something to be released or controlled; if controlled it is sublimated or deflected or distorted.”²⁹

The notion that Western civilization has become increasingly restrictive and that the colonies have provided escape hatches from it runs deep in early Orientalist traditions and remains resonant in their contemporary popular form.³⁰ Hayden White, among others, points to a modern cultural anthropology that “has conceptualized the idea of wildness as the repressed content of both civilized and primitive humanity,” of the “Wild Man . . . lurking within every man.”³¹ Sharon Tiffany and Kathleen Adams

27. David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness* (London: Verso, 1991) 97. Thus Roediger writes: “Some concept of projection is necessary to understand the growth of a sense of whiteness among antebellum workers, who profited from racism in part because it enabled them to displace anxieties within the white population onto Blacks. But the process of projection was not abstract. It took place largely within the context of working class formation and addressed the specific anxieties of those caught up in that process” (101).

28. Roediger 109, 117.

29. “Sexuality and Power: A Review of Current Work in the History of Sexuality,” *Feminist Studies* 8.1 (Spring 1982): 136.

30. See Sharon Tiffany and Kathleen Adams, *The Myth of the Wild Woman* (Cambridge: Schenkman, 1985), where these discourses on the eroticized native women are fully discussed. Louis Maleret’s *L’Exotisme Indochinois et la Littérature Française* (Paris: Larose, 1934) offers a wonderful analysis of the erotics of the exotic and a comprehensive bibliography. For a recent take on the representation of the sexualized and passive Asian female “in the patriarchal Western psyche” and the long genealogy of it see L. Hyun-Yi Kang, “The Desiring of Asian Female Bodies: Interracial Romance and Cinematic Subjection,” *Visual Anthropology Review* 9.1 (Spring 1993): 5–21.

31. Hayden White, “The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea,” *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1972) 7.

have similarly argued that the anthropological idea of the sexualized “Wild Woman” has provided the “mirror in which we perceive ourselves.”³² Peter Gay’s recent study of the bourgeois cultivation of hatred portrays male agents of empire as those who “satisfied their aggressive needs with abandon.”³³ Ian Buruma, in an otherwise excellent review of a new edition of the famous Dutch colonial novel by Louis Couperus, *Hidden Force*, writes that “the European fear of letting go, of being ‘corrupted’ of going native, was to a large extent, I suspect, the northern puritan’s fear of his (or her) own sexuality.”³⁴ Philip Mason similarly notes that Rhodesian whites in the early twentieth century attributed to the “native,” to “some dark and shadowy figure which they fear and hate, the desires they disapprove of most strongly in themselves . . . and when desire emerged, fear was not far away.”³⁵

Eroticized native bodies densely occupy the landscape of Western literary production and in the wake of Said’s now enshrined critique of Orientalism, a profusion of literary and historical studies have catalogued the wide range of sexual and gendered metaphors in which the feminized colonies, and the women in it, were to be penetrated, raped, silenced and (dis)possessed.³⁶ But the sexual assault on women has provided more than the foundational imagery of imperial domination. Colonialism itself has been construed as the sublimated sexual outlet of virile and homoerotic energies in the West.³⁷ To argue, however, that different notions

32. Tiffany and Adams, *The Wild Woman* 6.

33. In Gay’s Freudian analysis, racism and manliness provide the “alibis” for bourgeois aggression; deeply dependent on the notion of projection, Gay glaringly omits reference to Foucault.

34. Ian Buruma, “Revenge in the Indies,” *New York Review of Books* August 11, 1994: 30–32.

35. Philip Mason, *Birth of a Dilemma: The Conquest and Settlement of Rhodesia* (London: Oxford UP, 1958) 244. Or, as put similarly in a more recent postcolonial critique of late colonial discourse by Ali Behdad: “the negative vision of the Oriental is important to the colonizer’s identity because it provides him with an ‘imaginary’ Other onto whom his anxieties and fears are projected” (*Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* [Durham: Duke UP, 1994] 79).

36. For studies that “reorient” Said’s analysis in a gendered light see Sara Mill, *Discourses of Difference: an Analysis of Women’s Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991); Billie Mellman, *Women’s Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918: Sexuality, Religion and Work* (Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1992); Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers* 1994, and Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains*, 1991.

On the “extraordinary fascination with and fear of racial and sexual difference which characterized Elizabethan and Jacobean culture” see Newman, “‘And wash the Ethiop White.’”

37. These images of an unrestricted libido let loose on colonial and post-colonial terrain remain tenacious leitmotifs in contemporary analyses of homoeroticism. See Kaja Silverman’s analysis

of bourgeois manhood were merely confirmed by colonial ventures is to dilute a more complicated story. If the colonies were construed as sites where European virility could be boldly demonstrated it was because they were also thought to crystallize those conditions of isolation, inactivity, decadence, and intense male comradery where heterosexual definitions of manliness could as easily be unmade.

Freudian assumptions about the relationship between repression and desire hold fast. While Edward Said rightly notes how much the Orient has been conceived as "place where one could look for sexual experiences unobtainable in Europe," Ronald Hyam has taken that colonial discourse not as an object of critique but as a reasonable tool of analysis.³⁸ Hyam's *Empire and Sexuality* exemplifies a recent twist on the theme of an unrestricted colony and a restricted west. He holds that empire provided "sexual opportunities" for European men when those in Britain were severely reduced. While explicitly deferring to Foucault's "model of sexual politics" to describe sexual attitudes in nineteenth-century Britain, the repressive hypothesis is what frames his argument and with it questions of power and racism remain out of his account.³⁹ For Hyam, among others, the colonies are a site for the "revenge of the repressed," an open terrain for European male ejaculations curtailed in the West.⁴⁰ Hyam's narrow focus on genitalia rather than gender, on the sexual fantasies of elite white males, on "sexual relaxation" rather than rape, is only part of his problem.⁴¹ The

of T. E. Lawrence's homoerotic voyages ("White Skin, Brown Masks: The Double Mimesis, or With Lawrence in Arabia," *Differences* 1.3 (1989): 3–54), or Michelle Green's exploration of the sensual delights and opportunities for pleasure in post-war Tangiers for Paul Bowles and his compatriots, *The Dream at the End of the World: Paul Bowles and the Literary Renegades in Tangiers* (New York: Harper, 1992).

38. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) 190.

39. Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990) 58.

40. For a very different use of this notion of the "revenge of the repressed" see Malek Alloula's *Colonial Harem* where he analyses, and to some extent reproduces, the pornographic pleasures and power infused in erotic postcards of Algerian women as "illustrated forms of colonialist discourse" ([Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986] 120).

41. For a sharp critique of Hyam's attention to genitalia not gender, and to great white men not the racial politics of sexuality see Luise White's review of *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 25.3 (1992): 664–65. On Hyam's euphemisms for sexual exploitation see Mark T. Berger's review (in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 17.2 (1988): 83–89) of an earlier paper entitled "Empire and Sexual Opportunity" on which the later book was based.

sexual politics of empire has never reduced to the opportunistic possibilities prompted by repressions in Europe alone.⁴²

What gets clouded in such accounts is precisely where Foucault's analysis would lead us to turn. Colonial discourses of sexuality were productive of class and racial power, not mere reflections of them. The management of European sexuality in the colonies was a class and gender-specific project that animated a range of longings as much as it was a consequence of them. Nor were these confined just to the colonies. As Ian Buruma tells it, when he was growing up in the Hague in the 1940s and 1950s, the production of desire that continued to surround Eurasian "half-caste" girls ensured that they were still considered "hot."⁴³ But attention to the discourses on sexual desire only captures a small part of the psychological complexities that turned imitation into mockery, ambivalence into aggression, and reduced cultural nostalgia into a desire for—or prohibitions against—sex.⁴⁴

Discourses about sexual contagions, moral contamination and reproductive sterility were not applicable to any and all whites, nor were they freefloating, generalized pronouncements that treated all bodies as equally susceptible and the same. These discourses circulated in a racially charged magnetic field in which debates about sexual contamination, sexual abstinence or spermatic depletion produced moral clusters of judgment and

42. For a review of a recently published set of books that work off this repressive model, see Bruce Robbin's "Colonial Discourse: A Paradigm and its Discontents," *Victorian Studies* 35.2 (Winter 1992): 209–14 where he similarly asks:

is the Empire to be conceived, as a number of the authors in these volumes seem to convey it, as the "unconscious" of nineteenth-century culture, a repressed but definitive truth that is always already obliged to return? Or does an allegorical Freudianism of this sort soften the hard fact that the Empire could be successfully ignored, even by what has been judged highest in nineteenth-century culture? . . . Or to take another example of displaced Freudianism, is everything said by the colonizer about the colonized to be understood as a projection of the colonizer's anxieties? If imperialism required not just a rationale (the inferiority of the natives), but working knowledge of a certain objectivity that would aid in conquering and ruling, then projection probably is not the whole story. (212–13)

43. Buruma, "Revenge in the Indies" 32.

44. Homi Bhabha credits Fanon with having identified these colonial dislocations but I think Bhabha himself does it with much more subtlety and care. It is also, of course, Bhabha who exemplifies a welding of Foucauldian and Freudian analyses, via Lacan in many of the articles collected in his *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994). Also see Michael Rogin's fine analysis of how blackface musicals drew on racial images to secure and resolve a nostalgic narrative of national identity in "'Democracy and Burnt Cork': The End of Blackface and the Beginning of Civil Rights," *Representations* 46 (Spring 1994): 1–34.

distinction that defined the boundaries of middle-class virtue, lower-class immorality and the deprivations of those of colonial birth or of mixed-race.

Whiteness, Class and the Sexual Truth Claims for Being European

It is the pull of this racially charged field that I turn to here. The range of competing and converging myths of the sexualized Other that riddle European belles-lettres, colonial official texts and the sub-disciplines of nineteenth-century science have been the subject of a contemporary critical tradition for some time. Rather than rehearse them, I have another task: namely to take up Foucault's contention that desire was animated by discourses of sexuality and productive of new forms of power. It is a particular wedge of that discourse on European desire that interests me here, one that divided those Europeans who embraced European bourgeois respectabilities from those who did not. I want to look at how asymmetries in the production of the discourse of desire differed by gender and class, at how effectively these distinctions affirmed a shared notion of European bourgeois culture and its prescriptions for white normality.

And finally, in turning back to Foucault's claim that desire is not opposed to the law but produced by it, I ask what sorts of desires were incited by certain colonial discourses on moral reform and sexual regulation. What of those, for example, that spoke incessantly of the subversive dangers of mixed-bloods and their moral perversions? Those that reiterated the base sexual drives of common European soldiers and their homoerotic tendencies? Those Protestant dailies and weeklies in the Netherlands that proliferated in the 1880s, incessantly warning "every Dutch youngster" against the "indescribable horror and bestiality" that reigned in the Indies army barracks and the sexual dangers that awaited them?⁴⁵ Those that spoke to the sexual precocities of Indies youths and the passions that the tropics unleashed? These discourses not only recorded inappropriate desire, but created spaces for it as they struggled to define what was racially distinctive about bourgeois sexuality itself. They reaffirmed that the "truth" of European identity was lodged in self-restraint, self-discipline, in a managed sexuality that was susceptible and not always under con-

45. Hanneke Ming, "Barracks-Concubinage in the Indies, 1887-1920," *Indonesia* 35 (1983): 65-93, 79.

trol.⁴⁶ But they also confirmed that if “the colonized” were driven by an insatiable instinct, certain Europeans were as well.

The point is an important one because colonial enterprises produced discourses that were not only about a racialized sexuality and a sexualized notion of race. These colonial discourses of desire were also productive of, and produced in, a social field that always specified class and gender locations. It is the cultural density of these representations that interest me here. The fact that these discourses do not reduce to racial typologies alone suggests that the colonial order coupled sexuality, class and racial essence in defining what it meant to be a productive—and therefore successfully reproductive—member of the nation and its respectable citizenry.

What is striking about the sexual stories that European colonials and their metropolitan observers told about their own desires and thus about what distinguished themselves is how boldly they turned on defining and affirming the bourgeois order in specific ways. European children, as we have seen, were said to be susceptible to sexual desires in the tropics at a much earlier age than in Europe. This demanded a vigilance about their rearing, their cordoning off from “precocious Indies youths,” repeated enumeration of the sexual dangers posed by servants and protection from a climate that encouraged “habitual licentiousness” at an early age.⁴⁷ Investments in a European-spirited education confirmed how much the European identities of these children had to be protected from the sexualized Other and how much those native adults and children with whom they came in contact had to be monitored and controlled. These discourses on children’s sexuality were rooted in a racial grammar, confirming that education was a moral imperative for bourgeois identity and a national investment, designed to domesticate the sexual desire of children and to direct how they would later decide who to consider eligible recipients of it.

A basic tension in the sexual politics of colonial states was the prom-

46. Thus, in the brilliant turn-of-the-century novel, *The Hidden Force*, by Louis Couperus, sexual craving and passion activated by the Indies causes the demise of the main character and representative figure of colonial paternalism. Resident Van Oudjick, because “he is susceptible to it.” See E. M. Beekman’s superb analysis of this major piece of Dutch colonial literature in “The Passatist: Louis Couperus’ Interpretation of Dutch Colonialism,” *Indonesia* 37 (1984): 59–76. Also see Ian Buruma’s review of the English edition, “Revenge in the Indies,” cited above.

47. Grenfell Price, *White Settlers in the Tropics* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1939) 31.

ise of new possibilities for desiring male subjects and objects for them, but implemented policies that simultaneously closed those possibilities down. The regulatory policies that first condoned and then condemned concubinary relations between Asian women and European men activated as much discussion about the merits, pleasures and gratifications of these utilitarian relations as about the morally degraded nature of them.⁴⁸ In the name of British, French, and Dutch moralizing missions, colonial authority supposedly rested on the rigor with which its agents distinguished between desire and reason, native instinct and white self-discipline, native lust and white civility, native sensuality and white morality, subversive unproductive sexuality and productive patriotic sex.

But these Manichean lines were not always drawn with racial clarity. The class divisions that divided colonial discourses of desire distinguished subaltern white men from their middle-class counterparts in fundamental ways. European men of lower-class were repeatedly accused of giving into their biological drives at the cost of empire—and by more than contemporary colonial apologists. Thus Grenfell Price, in a publication of the American Geographical society as late as 1939, attributed the downfall of sixteenth-century Portuguese colonies to the “unbridled passions of the lower types of invaders.”⁴⁹ Kenneth Ballhatchet notes that in eighteenth-century British India, “special provisions”—not applicable to the “educated English gentleman”—were made “for the sexual satisfaction of British soldiers because they came from the lower classes and so were thought to lack the intellectual and moral resources required for continence.”⁵⁰ Eugene Genovese similarly notes that lower-class white men invariably were made responsible for the sexual abuses of slavery.⁵¹

In the Indies, the equation of common-class origins and unchecked licentiousness was much the same. Here, prostitution was excused on the grounds that a common European soldier had to satisfy his “natu-

48. See, for example, some of the following: Ducimus, “Het prostitutie-vraagstuk in het Indische leger,” *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift* 1–6 (1902): 188–212 and 318–28; W. D. Koot, “Het Concubinaat” (no publisher, 1905); A. De Braconier, “het Kazerne-Concubinaat in Ned-Indie,” *Vragen van den Dag* 28 (1913): 974–95; S. Weijl and W. H. Boogaardt, *Pro en Contra: Het Concubinaat in de Indische Kazernes* (Baarn: Hollandia, 1917).

49. Price, *White Settlers* 16.

50. Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980) 2.

51. Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll* (New York: Pantheon) 421.

ral sexual appetites," "that a woman remains indispensable to him."⁵² If thwarted from exercising his "natural" sexual urges, he would resort to "unnatural vices," specifically to masturbation or sexual relations with other men.⁵³ Concubinage with native women in the Indies army barracks was justified as preferable to homosexual contacts and social intimacies outside the state's control. But not everyone agreed. Debates over whether it was "healthy" for common soldiers to refrain from indulging their "sexual drive" also spoke to other concerns. One outspoken critic of the barrack-concubinage system, Dr. J. Kohlbrugge, admonished an Indies ethic in which the indiscriminant satisfaction of one's sexual tendencies was considered a "right," a "necessity," even "as in France, a *droit du travail*." He opined that the serious consequences of such a course were clear; a "paralysis of energy," a "disappearance of self-control," a "dampening of the desire to work"—all characteristics that described the native, absent in, and defining of, what was European.⁵⁴

It is difficult to assess to what extent, what Foucault called the "discursive verbosity" that surrounded the sexual relations between European agents of empire and local women in fact animated new sorts of desires for such relations (HS:33). Whose pleasures and what sorts of desires were produced out of this careful surveillance is hard to tell.⁵⁵ What we do know is that because common soldiers were barred from marriage and poor European women were barred from the barracks, sexual accommodations of varied sorts prevailed.⁵⁶ Military officials condoned concubinage as a "necessary evil" on the grounds that it significantly lowered the subsis-

52. See Liesbeth Hesselink, "Prostitution: the Necessary Evil," *Indonesian Women in Focus*, eds. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Anke Niehof (Dordrecht, Holland: Foris, 1987), 206–07; and Verbaal 29 December 1903, no. 47, Minister of Colonies, quoted in Ming, "Barracks Concubinage." 53. S. Weijl and W. Boogaardt, *Het Concubinaat in de Indische Kazernes* (Baarn: Hollandia, 1917) 8.

54. J. F. H. Kohlbrugge, "Prostitutie in Nederlandsch-Indie," *Indisch Genootschap, Algemene vergadering van 19 Februari 1901*, 33.

55. On the fact that interracial sexual relations were more than a problem among low-level civil servants and the military rank and file see John Ingelson, "Prostitution in colonial Java," *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Indonesia: Essays in honour of Professor J. D. Legge* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash UP, 1986) 123–40. Ingelson notes that in Surabaya in the 1860s there were also brothels "owned by Europeans, employing European women and catering for European men" (126).

56. See especially A. de Braconier who provides a summary history of the sexual arrangements of European soldiers since the seventeenth century in "Het Kazerne-Concubinaat in Ned-Indie," *Vragen van den Dag XXVIII: 1974–95*.

tence requirements of soldiers without incurring higher wages or the increased medical costs that came with prostitution and a syphilitic rank and file.⁵⁷ The availability to European recruits of native women in sexual and domestic service—these “living grammar books” (*levende grammair*) as they were sometimes called—was part of the male “wages of whiteness.” This was a set of policies that legitimated the intimate regulation of the lives of common European soldiers and those Asian women who came in contact with them. But what is absent from, and usually unspeakable in, this discourse on “evil” is as striking as what it contained; the dangers of a homosexual European rank and file were implicitly weighed against the medical hazards of rampant heterosexual prostitution: both were condemned as morally pernicious and a threat to racial survival.⁵⁸

While the moral dangers of homosexuality in these debates on concubinage often went unstated, strident moral disparagements were explicitly cast on those of inferior class and race. In this discursive terrain, the eugenic peril of mixing the “lower elements” of Europeans and Asians was supposedly illustrated by the dismal fate of the children of these mixed unions.⁵⁹ Referred to disparagingly as *soldatenkinderen*, the term itself im-

57. Those who supported concubinage argued that lifting the prohibition on marriage would raise military expenses three to five times above those under the concubinary system. See S. Weijl and W. H. Boogaardt, *Pro en Contra: Het Concubinaat in de Indische Kazernes* (Baarn: Hollandia, 1917) 11. In 1913, it was estimated that out of 34,000 European and native soldiers, forty percent of those classified as European had contracted some form of venereal disease, as opposed to only ten percent of the soldiers classified as native. According to Philip Curtin (*Death by Migration*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1989) “venereal disease was . . . the most important single cause of hospitalization in most nineteenth-century armies—at home or overseas” (156).

58. While the dangers of “unnatural desires” between men were more often assumed than discussed this was not always the case. In a debate over the merits of retaining barracks-concubinage one military official in 1893 noted that in the absence of women at the Gombong military compound, “far more than half of the young men quartered there were guilty of practicing unnatural vices [with other men]” (postscript to report dated 1893, in *Verbaal 21-1-1903* quoted in Ming, 1983: 69). Twenty years later the abolition of concubinage was again debated on similar grounds but with different resolution. The archbishop of Batavia held that “unnatural desires” could be “strictly controlled” but “not rooted out” (see Ming, “Barracks-Concubinage” 81).

59. For a brief discussion of the eugenics discourse in the Netherlands Indies see my “Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power” (1991): 72–73. Cf. Jan Noordman (*Om de kwaliteit van het nageslacht: Eugentica in Nederland, 1900–1950*. [Nijmegen: SUN, 1989]) who argues that although many Dutch eugenicists may have thought in terms of racial superiority, such statements were rare (129). While he is right that the valorization of “racial purity” was never made as explicitly in

plied illegitimate and sordid origins. Here was fertile ground for moral intervention and charitable goodwill, for extended debates about native prostitution and white pauperism, as well as obvious evidence for why managed sex and a moral upbringing should be of the state's concern and in its control. What was animated, however, were not only sexual fantasies and titillations about the barrack underworld, but a set of practical and perceptual "effects" that kept questions of racial mixing and racial clarity in clear view, where the desire to know the "truth" of race and sex, to know what caused European men "to go native" and European women to choose a native man, placed questions of moral deprivation and the psychological coordinates of racial belonging as favored and recurrent themes among the architects of military and civilian colonial rule.

The discourse that condoned concubinage and acquiesced to the biological drives of common European men did more than justify military policy. It distinguished those middle-class European men with a right to rule from both those decadent nobility and those class and racial commoners who did not. It identified men who degenerated out of the European camp, those betrayed by their desires from those Europeans guided by self-discipline and sexual restraint. It divided "men of character" and reason from men of passion. As importantly, as more restrictions were placed on concubinary arrangements for all civil servants and military staff at the turn of the twentieth century, it rehearsed and took solace in a specific narrative that concubinage only remained in those outposts where "cultivated marriageable European young women were scarce."⁶⁰

Within this racialized economy of sex, European women and men won respectability by steering their desires to legitimate paternity and intensive maternal care, to family and conjugal love; it was only poor whites, Indies-born Europeans, mixed-bloods and natives who, as we might remember from the preceding chapter, focused just too much on sex. To be truly European was to cultivate a bourgeois self in which familial and national obligations were the priority and sex was held in check—not by silencing

the Netherlands as it was among racial hygienists in Germany, literature from the Indies on the mixed, Indo population calls into question Noordman's contention that a notion of racial superiority was of little import in Dutch eugenists' arguments.

60. AR, report on officers and civil servants living with a concubine from the Government-Secretary to the Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies, 8 March 1904. Also see R. A. Kern, "De controleurs en 't concubinaat," *Tijdschrift voor het Binnenlandsch Bestuur* 28.1 (1905): 250–52.

the discussion of sex, but by parcelling out demonstrations of excess to different social groups and thereby gradually exorcising its proximal effects. Desires for opulence and sex, wealth and excess were repeatedly attributed to creole Dutch and lower-class Europeans, to those with culturally hybrid affiliations and/or of mixed-blood origin. Once again, persons ruled by their sexual desires were natives and “fictive” Europeans, instantiating their inappropriate dispositions to rule.

Pleasure, Power and the Work of Scientific Pornography

The discourses of desire that surrounded European colonial women reflect some predictable qualities of nineteenth-century gender ideology, but not in all ways. We know the received, official script, that white women were encased in a model of passionless domesticity, mythologized as the desired objects of colonized men, categorically dissociated from the sexual desires of European men and disallowed from being desiring subjects themselves. As custodians of morality, they were poised as the guardians of European civility, moral managers who were to protect child and husband in the home. But clearly some women saw other options and made sexual and conjugal choices that speak to other possible scenarios, and other stories. European women who veered off respectable course were not only stripped of the European community’s protection of their womanhood, but disavowed as good mothers and as true Europeans. Thus the Indies mixed-marriage law of 1898 relegated those European women to native status who chose cohabitation over marriage and chose native men over the European-born on the argument that if these women were really European they would never have made such inappropriate choices.⁶¹

In Dutch colonial novels, women of European status but of Indies birth, or of mixed-blood and common class origin appear as sensual, erotically charged beings, driven by passion in ways that “pure-blood” middle-class European women void and supposedly bereft of desire were not.⁶² Each of these representations of bourgeois propriety and the social norms they

61. See my “Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers . . .” for discussion of the racial issues that surrounded the mixed marriage judicial debates.

62. Again see Couperus’ *Hidden Force* where sexual passion circulates in a creole, Eurasian, Javanese world of illicit liaisons around the transgressions of Leonie, the creole wife of a colonial resident, not Eva, that woman who is educated, cultured and truly European.

prescribed hinged on the presence of other actors, on a marking of their sexuality as the essence of what kinds of human beings they were, as indexical of the social category to which they truly belonged. These discourses of sexuality could tell not only the truth about individual persons, but about racial and national entities. They linked subversion to perversion, racial purity to conjugal white endogamy, and thus colonial politics to the management of sex.

The production of new sites and strategies of colonial control engendered by the discourse on sexuality is easier to identify than the production of the “incessant spirals” of pleasure and power that Foucault would suggest it allowed. For the “talking cure” about sex in the colonies was voyeuristic and visual and not primarily in the confessional mode. It addressed less directly the “truth” of one’s own desires, than a phantasmic litany of sexual specifications and excesses that distinguished these Others from European bourgeois selves.

A “gynecological study,” *Women in Java*, published simultaneously in Semarang and Amsterdam by a Dr. C. H. Stratz in 1897 is exemplary of that mode.⁶³ Here the sexual pleasures of scientific knowledge join with the pornographic aesthetics of race. The “pleasures” infused in Stratz’s study derive only in part from its full-front illustrations of naked nubile women’s bodies with their arms raised and hands clasped behind their heads.⁶⁴ For this quintessential example of “scientia sexualis” is a guide to racial taxonomies and racially attributed psychological and physiological characteristics as well.

What does this pornographic racial taxonomy entail? Preceding the photos, the study is introduced with an analysis of different races, of those “colored” who morally “lag behind those of “the pure race” and of the Javanese who are “very indolent, fearful, without initiative and who have

63. Re-presentations of that mode have appeared in the form of postcolonial critique for some time, and some might argue that there is no longer reason to give space to such degradations here. University of Minnesota Press’ high gloss coffee-table format for Malek Alloula’s *Colonial Harem*—which literally takes the viewer through the progressive baring of Algerian women’s bodies—is a case in point of this ‘double-exposure.’ Sander Gilman’s study of the iconography of prostitutes and Hottentot women might be cited on similar grounds. While my analysis of the “scientific” study below omits both the photos accompanying that piece and its most explicit descriptive obscenities, I do not hold that such pornographic texts should be buried or effaced from view. At issue is how we use them and write against their prurient grain.

64. Dr. C. H. Stratz, *De vrouwen op Java: eene gynaecologische studie* (Amsterdam: Scheltema and Holkemas; Samarang: G.C.T. van Dorp, 1897).

an entirely different understanding of lying and cheating than Europeans do.”⁶⁵ Gynecologically speaking, these might seem superfluous observations. But this is not only a sexual treatise on women; it is a “scientific” treatise on the aesthetics of race, on the erotics of the exotic, on Javanese women as a prototype of what makes their bodies desirable to, and their bodies and minds so distinctive from, Europeans. Stratz’s description of Javanese women attends closely to skin shade, to color and quantity of hair, as he moves down from “their sleek dark hair,” to the “dark dusky eyes,” to the nearly hairless armpits, and to the “thick-haired mons veneris.”⁶⁶

The titillations that this passage may provoke are not unrelated to the particular kind of knowledge it holds in store. First, it celebrates the beauty of all Javanese women’s bodies as a generic type. Second, in asserting that Javanese women of the “Hindu and Malay type . . . share many common characteristics” it underscores that whatever differences might exist between different Asian bodies, more marked (and significant) is how they differ from Europeans and how much, among them, they are timelessly the same.

But what stands out in Stratz’s account is how clearly internal and skeletal body form reveals a woman’s hidden racial characteristics even when her physical appearance is that of a European. Stratz’s case in point is that of the distinctively Javanese pelvic shape of “a young woman, who was a fifth generation descendant of a Javanese mother and who distinguished herself by a conspicuously white, soft skin and pretty blonde hair.”⁶⁷ Outward similarity masks essential difference. The contrast offered with European women’s bodies are evinced in the “more spherical” shape of the skull and (in a “cursory inspection” of some twenty-five women housed in Soerabaja’s women’s hospital) by the measurements of the pelvis which (like the skull) is “rounder.”⁶⁸ This holds as well, Stratz notes, for the “colored of all racial types” who share this “round form.” The pelvis tells the inner “truth” of race and identity in ways that could not otherwise be proved or observed.

Following a centimeter fine comparison of pelvic measurements, Stratz

65. Stratz, *De vrouwen op Java* 5.

66. Stratz 6, 8.

67. Stratz 14.

68. Stratz 14.

turns back to his aesthetic concerns. He counts the “fine modelling of the trunk, shown especially in the delicate line of the dorsal muscle” as being one of the great beauties of the Javanese female body.” This, he notes, is less a “racial characteristic” than due to the “total absence of a corset in the Javanese women’s dress.”⁶⁹ Thus, despite their small size, they can be “very elegant” and Stratz points the reader to the frontal and profile photographs of two nude young women, one only adorned with an ankle bracelet, her body positioned in a languid pose, her arms lifted and curved away from the photographer, wrapped around her neck.

Stratz confirms that “this fine modelling of the trunk” is not a “racial characteristic,” noting that many European women on Java wear no corsets and if so only in the afternoons, and “therefore one finds among them as well many more beauties and also more well-kept up figures at a later age than in the high gloss (*geverniste*) fashion world of Europe.”⁷⁰ This is a dissonant passage on several counts: one, because the dress codes of European women would seem to be beside the point, and two, few texts attribute any beauty to European women in the tropics and certainly none that might derive from their physical form. More commonly underscored is the aesthetic and emotional price that European women pay to live indolently in the tropics—the ravaging of their bodies by inactivity, cumbersome and dangerous pregnancies, and rash-producing heat. It is the tropics that bring all women closer to (their) nature.

But Stratz does not dwell on these climatic levellings. He turns back to racial characteristics, to those “finely built limbs,” to the “hyperextension of the elbow joints” that one often sees in the “engravings at [the Hindu temple of] Borobodur,” to the shape of the fingers, legs, feet, toes, and to the “extremely limited development of the calves,” a “characteristic [that Javanese] share with all Oriental peoples.”⁷¹ Again he returns to color, to the skin tone of Javanese women, to the “blue spot” at the base of the spine and finally to a studied description of the vagina’s pigment variations from the outer labia to those “smaller pigment spots lying scattered high

69. Stratz 14–15. Given that all of Stratz’s models are nude, the reader would have little reason to doubt his claims, but it is a strange observation for anyone familiar with urban and rural women’s dress in Java since the *setagen*, a long “abdominal sash” wound several times around the body from the pelvis to up above the waist, is the girdled part of their toilet.

70. Stratz 15.

71. Stratz 16.

in the vagina.” Nowhere is Stratz on, as it were, more firmly pleasurable and knowing ground.

While chromatics and other sensory modes reign supreme in his classificatory scheme, in fact it is the hidden features of these women’s racialized sexuality—and Stratz’s “expert” gaze—to which the reader is asked to attend. Differences found on the outer surface of the body are confirmed by the special and privileged knowledge and view he shares of the deep and unique markings within it. Commenting again on the lack of hair around the clitoris, he instructs his readership to the “particularly clear” view of this in a photograph he provides. But there is nothing clear in the figure at all. And this is just the point. The reader’s gaze must be studied, because there is little to see in this profile picture. We must rely on Stratz’s privileged view. Our gaze is pointed inward, to that which is not visible—but with Stratz’s expert help—easily imagined.

The meticulous attention paid to detail in the above contrasts sharply with what the section that follows on the gynecological illnesses among European women. There is no symmetry in form or content, no detailed descriptions of bodies, no pictures, no European women subjected to view. There is no nuanced discussion of the European women’s sexual organs, no lingering over their texture and gradated hue. In this context, talking about and looking for the truth of identity in sexual organs is reserved for non-whites. For European women, there is only a list of genital pathologies and a note that despite his meager sample, when compared with European statistics, noteworthy differences are evident deriving from a tropical way of life. Rather than discussing physical form and abstracted body parts, Stratz describes what he sees as more relevant, a colonial life style for European women that compares “with the most comfortable classes in Europe.”⁷² Their distinctions are not defined by vaginal coloring: matters of leisure, power, and privilege determine where the difference rests. He notes that white women are surrounded by a bevy of servants who spare them hard or exerting physical labor, outside the home and within it. They have, he notes, the time to keep themselves pure and clean, bathing at least twice a day in cool water, lathering the whole body. And least we think these purifying ceremonies are confined to grown women

72. Stratz 20.

he adds that “daily vaginal douches . . . [for] children are an integral part of daily bodily cleansing.”

Here the aesthetics is, if anything, of race, the pleasures are of purification. Unlike Stratz’s earlier allusion to the beauty of some European women in the tropics, here he returns to a more conventional portrayal, of colorless bodies, cleansed of dirt, devoid of sex. The discourse is one of physical inactivity and vigilant hygiene for women and children. He notes that this “hygienic way of life” seems to contrast sharply with the striking “paleness of all European women living in the tropics” which even experts attribute to “tropical anemia.” But Stratz believes in no such thing. His antiseptic ethnographic account ends with approval of an Indies dress code that affords European children freedom of movement and adult women freedom from the restricting undergarments of Europe that press on stomach and breasts.⁷³

While it would be disingenuous to take Stratz’s study as representative of what preoccupied all Dutch colonial medical practitioners, the aestheticization of race and the distributions of sexual desire that it invoked were neither confined to the Indies, unique to the Dutch, nor unusual among them. In fact Stratz’s discourse is part of a well-honed tradition in the science of race. George Mosse dates the aestheticization of race from the late 1700s; the eroticization of race is a discourse of the Renaissance long before. Sander Gilman documents such scientific study of the unique sexuality of different races from the early 1800s. Others, such as Gilberto Freyre, continued to produce such discourses well into the twentieth century. But the “standard of beauty as a criterion of racial classification” did not produce as neat a correlation between beauty and desire, between aesthetically pleasing and racially superior populations as some commentators would lead one to expect.⁷⁴ For Javanese women could be considered both “beautiful” and “lazy,” “elegant,” and “deceitful,” “finely-modelled,” and intellectually lacking at the same time. To be physically “underdeveloped” and libidinally “oversexed” was not an oxymoron. For this was a discourse and a domain of knowledge that was productive of, and responsive to, taxonomies of power and a range of desires that articulated unevenly with the multiple hierarchies of nation, gender, race, and class.

73. Stratz 22.

74. George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985) 23.

It is not insignificant, for example, that this “gynecological study” of women on Java eroticizes some women and not others or that the section on obstetrics contains no photographs at all. Sexuality is the stronger marker of difference and what Stratz knows about. He writes that both native and European women unwisely sought the help of poorly trained native and European midwives less than skilled doctors like himself. As he put it, “the white woman on Java” was “very far behind her European sisters.” In the domain of reproduction Javanese and European women would seem to be similar, but this too is not the case. For the discourse on respectable European women in the Indies is almost exclusively framed by their functional roles as mothers and wives in contrast to the discourse on native and mixed-blood women which is not.

Stratz’s text is blatantly salacious, deceptively straightforward—and misleading. Based on it alone one might conclude that discourses on sexuality always took a predictable form in which colonial knowledge and power were invariably produced from the prurient sexual pleasures bestowed on those who recorded, read, and vicariously participated in it. It demands that readers rivet their attention on genitalia in the making of race, confirming the story that colonialism was that quintessential project in which desire was always about sex, that sex was always about racial power, and that both were contingent upon a particular representation of non-white women’s bodies. It rehearses the proverbial story that native women were the object of the white male gaze and white women were assiduously protected from it. Even from a critical vantage point, readers are caught within its frame. It is a story about powerful subjects looking upon sexual objects, one in which sex was about power and other desires were merely deflections and projections of both.

While we should attend to such accounts, they have their limitations. As should be clear from chapters 4 and 5, the discourse of sexuality tied truth claims about persons to the truth about sex in more nuanced ways. That discourse embraced a range of other desires between mothers and children, nursemaids and their charges, European men and their Asian housemaids and between European men that spoke to a broader set of sentiments. If it is the production of desire we are after, then it is neither to Stratz’s aestheticized prurience nor to the greedy gaze of French colonial postcards that we should turn. We need to situate these discourses in a wider frame, one in which desire itself is the subject, where its relationship to the colonial order of things was sometimes askew, sometimes

opaque, where desire and race were mediated through other sentiments by which they were more insidiously bound.

Of Desire and Other Sentiments

These discourses on sexuality had concrete effects, as Foucault would suggest, that in turn intensified the micro-centers of colonial control: a strict control of servants, a protracted discourse on and investments in the education and rearing of European children, a century-long debate over poor white welfare, and increasingly tighter restriction on which Europeans could immigrate to the colonies and the moral standards and domestic arrangements by which they were obliged to live. Cultivation of the bourgeois self depended on a catalogue of sexual dispositions about different human kinds. This sexual taxonomy was paired with a wider set of psychological and invisible characteristics that glossed the categories of bourgeois respectability, whiteness, and true Europeans.

But sexual desires were structured by desires and discourses that were never about sex alone. Desires to “pass” as white, to have one’s progeny be eligible for higher education, or the sentiment that Frantz Fanon attributes to the man of color who desires “to marry white culture . . . to grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine” all suggest that sexual desire in colonial and postcolonial contexts has been a crucial transfer point of power, tangled with racial exclusions in complicated ways.⁷⁵ Such desires, on the one hand, may use sex as a vehicle to master a practical world (privileged schooling, well-paying jobs in the civil service, access to certain residential quarters) which was in part what being colonial and privileged was all about.

How do we untangle what is about sex and what is not? Foucault’s starting point in some ways facilitates that task, but not in others. For *The History of Sexuality* is not a history of western desire but rather a history of how sexual desire came to be the test of how we distinguish the interior Other and know our true selves. In this perspective, the protracted colonial discourses that linked sexual passion to political subversion and managed sexuality to patriotic priorities make sense. These were discourses that secured the distinctions of individual white bodies and the privileges of a white body politic at the same time. But Foucault’s account in volume 1

75. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 63.

of *The History of Sexuality* assumes that sexuality was the dominant, principal mode in which the truth of the self was expressed—a claim on which his later volumes were to cast some doubt.

What is so striking in the discourse on the sexuality of masturbating children, servants, degenerate white men, and intruders in the bourgeois home is what constitutes the threat in these transgressive moments. Sometimes sexual intimacy and precocity were at issue, but it was rarely just these. Evidence of affective ties, affective kinship, confusions and transfusions of blood and milk, sentiments of cultural belonging were as dangerous as carnal knowledge. Nor can those other sentiments be reduced to just alternative ways of talking about sexual contagion.⁷⁶ Subversions to the bourgeois order were those that threatened the cultivation of personality, what Weber once called “a certain internal and external deportement in life,” that repertoire of sensibilities that were glossed as “personal character” and carefully marked the boundaries of class and race.⁷⁷ It is these alienations of affection, these moments of “cultural contagion” that cut across the dichotomies of ruler and ruled, that clarified and confused what being respectable and colonial entailed.⁷⁸ Control and release of sexual desire was one of the leitmotifs of that story, but it embodied other themes as well. Cultivation of the self at once defined the interior landscapes of “true” Europeans and the interior frontiers of the superior polities to which they were constantly reminded they rightfully belonged.

Foucault’s equation of desire and power poses a problem for how we view the psychological ambivalences that colonial discourse invoked by suggesting that desire and power were always bound. Is it only an “illusion” and “vanity,” as Foucault claims, to ask whether there were no desires that stood to the side of colonial power or beyond it? Were there no desires that evaded the grip of power and escaped subsumption? Or would these retreats from the norm only further substantiate a normalizing pro-

76. On contagion as a dominant metaphor in Victorian culture see Athena Vrettos, *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995).

77. M. Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge, 1948) 426. Also see Ian Hunter’s analysis of “personality as a vocation” in the making of liberal education in Mike Gane and Terry Johnson, eds., *Foucault’s New Domain* (London: Routledge, 1993).

78. On the “contagious” quality of sentiment and feeling in the eighteenth century, see Adela Pinch’s fine analysis of Hume’s treatise on the passions in *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford UP, forthcoming).

cess by which all those with claims to civility—and those who rejected it—were bound? We have evidence of some such possible evasions, but not enough. Of European men and native women who cohabited in ways that went beyond the utilitarian sexual economy of concubinage, of European men who relinquished their claims to privilege by opting instead for liminal lives on the outskirts of European society, of native mothers whose desires to stay close to their children and not give them “up” to European schools may have expressed a rejection of the bourgeois European scales of merit all together.

While it is clear that production of these desires was not indifferent to the taxonomies of rule, they did not always uphold them. We may reject, with Foucault, a notion of primordial drive but still explore a space for individual affect structured by power but not wholly subsumed by it. In thinking about the “education of desire” more broadly, we are freed up from another Foucauldian quandary; namely, that by avoiding such an intense focus on sexuality, we can avoid reproducing the very terms of the nineteenth century imperial discourse that reduced and read all desires as sexual ones.⁷⁹ This is not to suggest that an obsession with sexuality does not underwrite colonial discourses. Rather it acknowledges a wider range of transgressive sentiments and cultural blurrings that informed what was unspeakable and what was said.

If a desiring subject, as Judith Butler writes, has the philosophical aim of discovering the “entire domain of alterity,” of finding “within the confines of this self the entirety of the external world,” then the imagined and practical world of empire must be seen as one of the most strategic sites for realizing that aim.⁸⁰ If desire is about both externalization and mimesis as so much of the philosophical literature on desire suggests, then no political story is more relevant to the production of western desire than colonialism, itself the quintessence of a process in which the mirroring of bourgeois priorities and their mimetic subversion played a defining role. Affirmation of the bourgeois self entailed an overlapping series of discursive displacements and distinctions on which its cultivation rest. There was no bourgeois identity that was not contingent on a changing

79. Ruth Levitas draws on E. P. Thompson's use of this term to describe nineteenth-century utopian projects. I use the “education of desire,” rather, as a way of understanding why parental, and specifically maternal, affection was so central to the racial and nationalist visions of the Dutch colonial state. See Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* 1990.

80. Butler, *Subjects of Desire* ix–x.

set of Others who were at once desired and repugnant, forbidden and subservient, cast as wholly different but also the same.

That “enemy within” that Foucault traced to the defense of society and that Freud traced to the defense of the self, may have more in common when the issue of racism is in clearer view. In an imperial frame, the psychological and political anxieties attributed to European bourgeois society draw on a common vocabulary in some striking ways—that European bourgeois self defined by its interior other, those European nation-states built on their individuated and collective “interior frontiers,” and those colonial empires that were the exteriorized sites where these internal borders were threatened and clarified are not part of a different order of things. Together they articulate what has made racial discourse so central—and resilient—in defining what being bourgeois and European were and continue to be about.

Truth claims made in the discourse on European sexuality can only appear as part of the deep genealogy of a European confessional mode when the imperial coordinates of the nineteenth century are not at issue. But even for Europe it is doubtful. For if we take our cue from the lectures on race, rather than from volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault himself alerts his audience to look in a different direction. The nineteenth-century discourse on bourgeois sexuality may better be understood as a recuperation of a protracted discourse on race, for the discourse on sexuality contains many of the latter’s most salient elements. That discourse on sexuality was binary and contrastive, in its nineteenth-century variant always pitting that middle-class respectable sexuality as a defense against an internal and external other that was at once essentially different but uncomfortably the same. The contaminating and contagious tropes of nineteenth-century sexual discourse were not new: they recalled and recuperated a discourse that riveted on defensive techniques for “constant purification.”⁸¹

Foucault might be right that the explanatory scientific weight accorded to sexual instinct only emerged in Freud’s psychoanalytic theory of the

81. We might remember from Chapter 3 how Foucault described that discourse of race in the seventeenth century as one which bifurcated society into an “upper” and a “lower” race with the latter representing the “reappearances of its own past” (DS:54), reminding us of Rawick’s notion that Englishmen in the seventeenth century saw West Africans as a “pornography of their former life.” But Rawick’s account is, as we saw, indebted to Freud’s notion of repression, not to Foucault.

nineteenth century, but its genealogical antecedents go back much further still.⁸² Assessments of sexual proclivity and racial membership were joined much earlier in a discourse that conferred the right to live in a certain way on those with the cultural competencies to exercise freedom, with the cultivated sensibilities to understand the limits of liberty, and with the moral strength to be untempted by lust and leisure. Sexual excess and misguided sentiments characterized those who were more fit to be slaves, indentured workers and the laboring under class or, like creoles and Indos in the Indies, unfit to rule an imperial world. Domesticated sexuality and managed sensibilities were endowments of those who stood above, and labelled, those troubled categories.

The point is not to reduce the entire discourse that coupled the truth of the self and the truth about one's sexual desire to a discursive variation on the discourse of race; but rather to suggest that the production and distribution of desires in the nineteenth-century discourse on sexuality were filtered through—and perhaps even patterned by—an earlier set of discourses and practices that figured prominently in imperial technologies of rule. Civilization could be defended against transgression by invoking the reasoned logic of race. Foucault would agree with this general point. There was no unitary bourgeois self already formed, no core to secure, no “truth” lodged in one's sexual identity. That “self,” that “core,” that “moral essence” that Fichte and colonial lawyers like Nederburgh sought to identify was one that Europe's external and internal “others” played a major part in making.⁸³

In locating the power of the discourse of sexuality in the affirmation of the bourgeois self, Foucault shortcircuited the discursive and practical field of empire in which Western notions of self and other were worked out for centuries and continue to be drawn. Race comes late into Fou-

82. Sander Gilman's recent work on Freud and race, where he argues that Freud's theories of sexual instinct were *responsive* to a common and earlier racial discourse that pathologized the sexual instincts of Jews, could add further credence to my claim. Gilman holds that Freud generalized a sexual pathology that had been discursively construed as a predisposition of Jews and made it into one of civilization, allowing Freud to reformulate “the illness attributed to the Jew's body [as] the disease of all human beings.” *Freud, Race and Gender* 1993: 90–91. Also see Marianna Torgovnick's *Gone Primitive* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1990), which situates Freud's analysis of sexuality and his fascination with the primitive in a wider Western discourse.

83. Stratz, *De vrouwen op Java* 18.

cault's story in *The History of Sexuality*, not basic to its grammar, where—in the lectures—he seems to suggest it belonged. One could argue that the history of Western sexuality must be located in the production of historical Others, in the broader force field of empire where technologies of sex, self, and power were defined as “European” and “Western,” as they were refracted and remade.