

1 Genealogies of the Intimate

Movements in Colonial Studies

L'homme reste homme tant qu'il est sous le regard d'une femme de sa race.¹

In 1929, one of the principal architects of French colonial educational policy, Georges Hardy, warned a group of prospective functionaries that “A man remains a man as long as he stays under the gaze of a woman of his race.” The statement is compelling on several counts. Both declarative and imperative, it threatens, prescribes, and assures, succinctly capturing a set of assumptions and anxieties about life in the colonial tropics for European men and the European women recruited to follow and care for them. Its conditional clause signals a caution: racial vigilance and virility were domestic and household affairs, and vulnerabilities of body and mind were tightly bound to the conjugal and sexual arrangements in which Europeans lived. It reminds the reader that the colonial “gaze” (*le regard*, in French) was to be at once broad, reflexive, and intimate. It was a regard fixed on the colonized but just as squarely on Europeans themselves. It was directed not only at those susceptible, recalcitrant, and marginal Europeans but as much at the well-heeled entrepreneur and Paris-schooled polytechnician, at the colony’s “old hands” and Leiden-trained greenhorns, at the foot soldiers of empire—at the high and low among them.

Hardy’s homily has the ring of received wisdom, but it was nothing of the sort. Most strikingly, as I argue throughout this book, it mandated a set of behaviors, a template for living, a care of the self, an ideal of domesticity that few European men in the colonies were ever able to realize, want, or afford. It boldly contradicted the unspoken norm that students of colonialism have documented so well: European men should “take on” native women not only to perform domestic work but to service their sexual needs, psychic well-being, and physical care. European manhood in the colonies, whether measured by “character” and civility or by position and class, was largely independent of the presence of European women. This discrepancy between prescription and

practice suggests not only more tangled stories of colonial expansion than imperial historians once allowed (among others, that European women followed men only *after* specific colonial regions were made politically, medically, and physically “safe”) but also a radically different set of plots.

Not least, the disjuncture between prescription and practice is a forceful reminder that white endogamy was neither an inevitable development nor even a norm. It was a strategic policy whose timing was planned, a reactive gesture, a contested site—and in many colonial contexts, a relatively late invention. It is also a reminder that the demographics of European expansion tell little in themselves. Ratios of men to women *followed* from how sexuality was managed and how racial categories were produced rather than the other way around. Interpretations of what it took to “remain a [European] man” in colonial Indonesia changed over time and varied widely—as did the photographic poses and placement of persons and objects by which this might be conveyed. Photographs like those in figures 1 through 6, most from family albums, made to be sent or brought back to the Netherlands, suggest comportment, dress, and service relations in those parts of the domestic order that people sought to archive and share.

Hardy’s injunction is important for what it says but equally arresting for what it does not. White-on-white domesticity was framed in opposition to more prevalent sorts of unions on which colonialisms thrived. These unions included the forced and financed arrangements of domestic and sexual service by housekeepers kept as live-in lovers and by live-in maids whose children were fathered by their European employers. These arrangements and exchanges of goods and services were made by local women who were labeled “Asian,” “African,” “colored,” or “black.” Hardy’s solution—“white women looking after white men”—was commonly used to counter what was also increasingly seen as a social problem and political danger in the French and Dutch empires of the early twentieth century: a growing population of mixed-blood children born out of these “mixed” unions, of men who had “gone native” or simply veered off cultural course, of European children too taken with local foods, too versed in local knowledge.

Moreover, heterosexual unions based on concubinage and prostitution across the colonial divide were defended as a “necessary evil” to counter those deemed more dangerous still—carnal relations between men and men. The question is not whether these were real dangers and thus whether their claims were true or false. The task is rather to identify the regimes of truth that underwrote such a political discourse and a politics that made a racially coded notion of who could be intimate with whom—and in what way—a primary concern in colonial policy. The colonial measure of what it took to

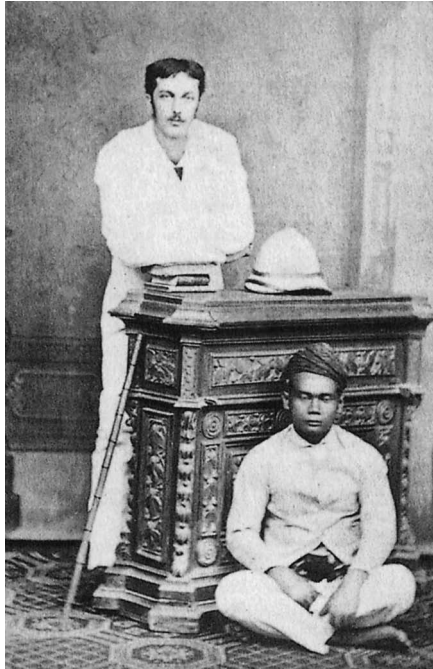
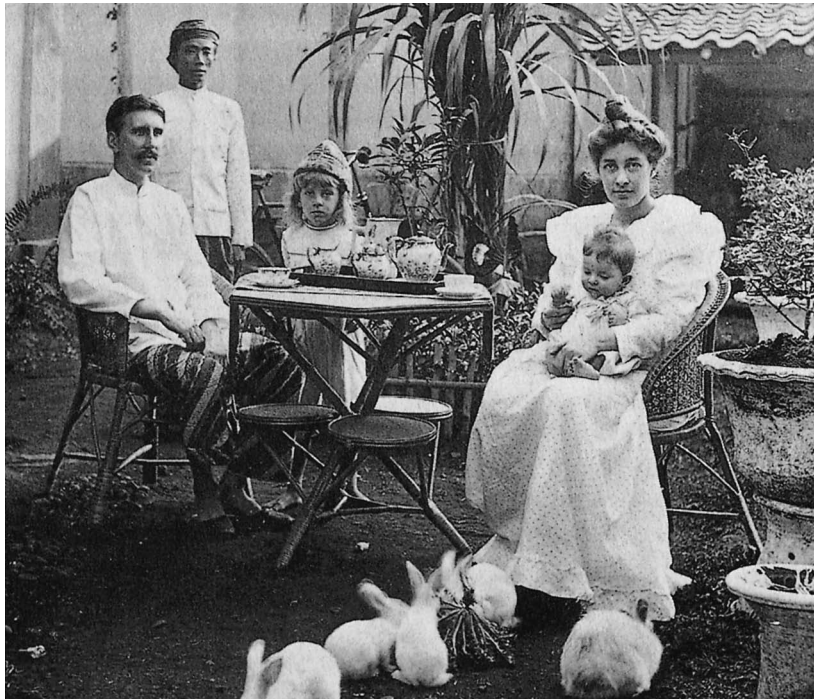


Figure 1. A calling card from Java, ca. 1890s. Leo Haks Collection.

Figure 2. 'The doctor's family J. Kunst in Batavia, Java,' 1899. KIT album 680/7, no. 16.



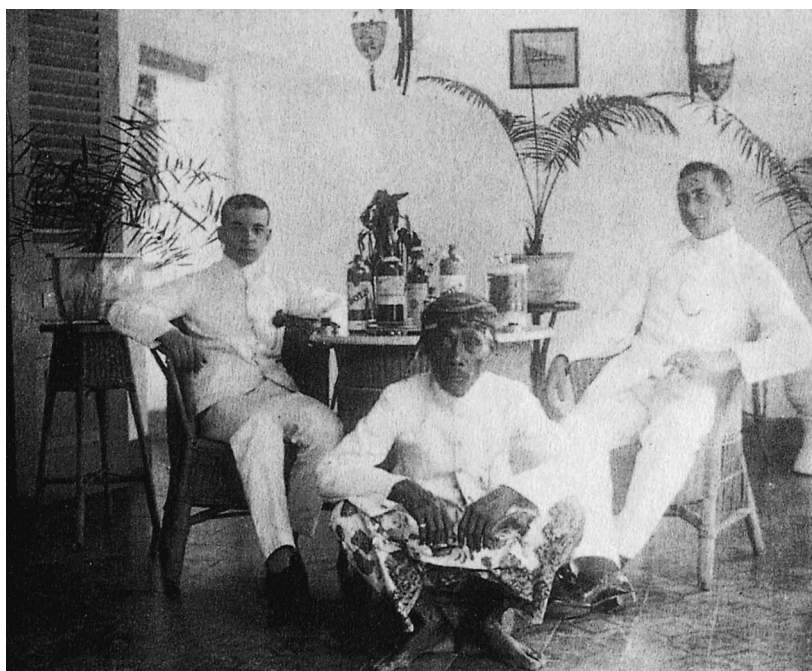


Figure 3. From a family album, ca. 1900. Leo Haks Collection.

Figure 4. 'E.J.G. Janssens, Major in KNIL [Netherlands Indies army] in pajamas, Bandjermasin, 1889.' KITLV no. 10.605.



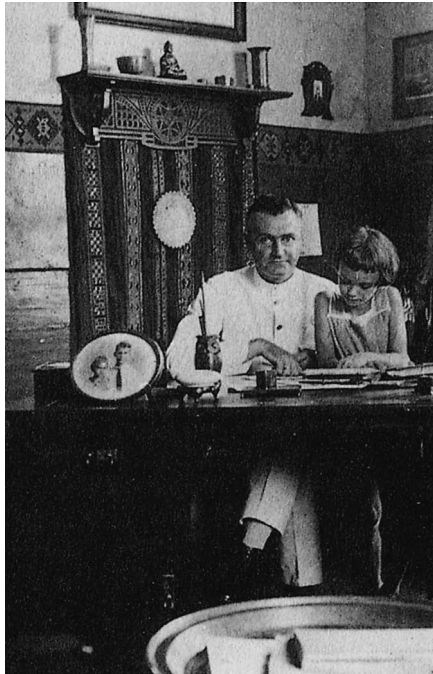


Figure 5. 'A father and his daughter,' ca. 1935. Photos like this one (and like fig. 6)—of European men in the Indies alone with their children—are rare, and even more so for the nineteenth century. KIT album 583/31.



Figure 6. 'A father and his child,' ca. 1935. KIT album 583/23.

be classified as “European” was based not on skin color alone but on tenuously balanced assessments of who was judged to act with reason, affective appropriateness, and a sense of morality.

Hardy’s focus was on a European male identity at risk and in the making, but his warning was not for men alone. Creating and securing the European community’s borders took on special significance when cultural, political, and sexual contagions were conjured everywhere—where European and native sensibilities and desires brushed against one another as they were borrowed and blurred. If grown men were at risk, their children were more so. Concubinage could be banned by colonial administrations (and at different times and in different colonial contexts it was), but the quotidian comforts of colonial life created by the constant presence of native nursemaids and housekeepers, washerwomen and watchmen, cooks and gardeners—who serviced and nurtured these European selves—could not. As colonial housekeeping manuals from the 1920s and 1930s show and as Javanese women and men who once worked as domestics in Dutch colonial homes recount today, it was in the disarray of unwanted, sought after, and troubled intimacies of domestic space that colonial relations were refurbished and their distinctions made.

Hardy’s warning underscores that the personal was highly political by invoking a set of associations among beliefs about European manliness, racial membership, sexual morality, and the management of empire that this book explores. Tracing the discrepancies between prescription and practice turns attention to the changing criteria by which European colonials defined themselves and to the uncertain racialized regimes of truth that guided their actions. Assessments of civility and the cultural distinctions on which racial membership relied were measured less by what people did in public than by how they conducted their private lives—with whom they cohabited, where they lived, what they ate, how they raised their children, what language they chose to speak to servants and family at home.

When Dutch children in the colonial Indies were forbidden to play with the children of servants because officials thought they might become too comfortable “babbling and thinking in Javanese,” when Javanese nursemaids were instructed to hold their charges away from their bodies so that the infants would not “smell of their sweat” (as women who worked as domestics in Dutch households tell it so many decades later), there was more going on than peevish squabbles over cultural style. These were part of a wider set of standards framed to ensure that European children in the colonies learned the right social cues and affiliations—and did not “metamorphize” into Javanese. These were part of the colonial state’s investment in knowledge

about the carnal, about sense and sensibility, what I have referred to elsewhere as its enduring commitment to “the education of desire.”

I pursue these connections between the broad-scale dynamics of colonial rule and the intimate sites of implementation not because the latter are good illustrations of this wider field or because they provide touching examples of, or convenient metaphors for, colonial power writ large. Rather, it is because domains of the intimate figured so prominently in the perceptions and policies of those who ruled. These are the locations that allow us to identify what Foucault might have called the microphysics of colonial rule. In them I locate the affective grid of colonial politics.

These chapters represent a series of studies in a decade-long project on the colonial order of things in the Netherlands Indies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. I am concerned with those patterns and rhythms of rule that were at once particular to that time and place but that are also resonant with colonial contexts in a wider comparative and global field. Not surprisingly, these chapters trace both a shared and an idiosyncratic research agenda. Although some dovetail with that wave of interdisciplinary scholarship animating studies of the colonial in the 1990s, they also chart their own peculiar course. My coordinates are located in the Javanese heartland of colonial Indonesia in the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century and in Deli, its rich North Sumatran plantation belt.² The chapters focus on the disjunctures experienced by those who lived in the Indies and those who imagined it only from afar, both the watched and those watching: Dutch schoolteachers, Javanese housemaids, Belgian plantation managers, Dutch journalists in Amsterdam and Surabaya, Semarang housewives, and Leiden lawyers, civil servants, and civilians who advised on policy and those at odds with them. I have asked why they raised the questions they did and what delusions and fears prompted their aversions or actions. Their questions—and refusals to question—have incited my own.

Books based on long-term projects often prompt a search to impose coherence retrospectively. But this one is marked by persistent recuperations: a dogged pursuit of recurrent themes, a sustained focus on the same archival densities and absences, an insistent return to hauntingly similar quotes, and a repeated underscoring of certain tensions and tactics. All of the chapters turn on domestic arrangements, affective ties, and the management of sex. I make no effort to edit out these reiterations. On the contrary, I draw directly on them to trace how frequently the political and the personal were meshed, to identify what was created as private and public, and to ask what affections were perceived as cultural defections on colonial terrain.

Here I try to make sense of why connections between parenting and colonial power, between nursing mothers and cultural boundaries, between servants and sentiments, and between illicit sex, orphans, and race emerge as central concerns of state and at the heart of colonial politics. Each chapter is an effort to discern what made those connections at once so pertinent and consequential and so invisible and effaced in how colonies were ruled and in the historiographies of them. Each in turn grapples with the discrepancies between hard-line prescriptions and messier practices, between the densities of the archives and the emphases of historians. I am interested here in an archival state that recorded and documented the intimacies of empire in ways that historians of the Netherlands Indies—until recently—assiduously have not.³

My concern is both with the logics that underwrote the colonial record and with the assumptions that underwrite contemporary analyses of them. In this introduction, I trace some of the concerns that have marked each chapter and draw on each chapter to locate how studies of the intimate and the colonial have shifted over the last twelve years. In the epilogue, I take the opportunity to address what questions these chapters begin to raise and some other directions we might go. Each chapter considers why the micro-management of sexual arrangements and affective attachments was so critical to the making of colonial categories and deemed so important to the distinctions between ruler and ruled. Thus each turns on the racialized politics of classification.⁴ My focus here is on both implicit and explicit colonial categories—on the histories of their making, the exclusions they enabled, and violences they condoned. Each bears historical witness to Ian Hacking's contention that the power of categories rests in their capacity to impose the realities they ostensibly only describe.⁵ Classification here is not a benign cultural act but a potent political one. On that argument, I look closely at the paradox and political consequence of racialized categories that were fixed and fluid, precise and protean, received and malleable, all at the same time.⁶ This was so, both for ostensibly clear-cut social kinds like "Dutchmen" and "European" and for interstitial kinds like those labeled "poor white" and "mixed-blood" whose members might fall or veer toward either side of the colonial divide or remain awkwardly in between.

All the chapters wrestle with the conceptual fixity of categories and the fluidity of their content. But in working through a disparate corpus of colonial practices, the book seeks to make a broader claim. It insists on the protean character of the categories themselves. Each chapter questions, through different venues, a common assumption: because certain category labels endured, their membership too remained the same. Colonial categories were

binding but unbound by those within them, were excessively rigid and exceeded their limits, had nuanced criteria for inclusion that were reworked by people who made them and by those they could not contain.

TRACKING THE INTIMATE

In-ti-mate. adj. 1. Marked by close acquaintance, association or familiarity. 2. Pertaining to or indicative of one's deepest nature. 3. Essential; innermost. 4. Characterized by informality and privacy. 5.a. very personal. b. of or having sexual relations. [Lat. *Intimatus*, p. part. of *intimare*, to intimate]. In-tim-ate. Tr.v. 1. To communicate with a hint or other indirect sign. 2. To announce; proclaim. [Lat. *intimare*/ Lat. *intimus*, innermost]

The American Heritage Dictionary

As the citation above indicates, the notion of the "intimate" is a descriptive marker of the familiar and the essential *and* of relations grounded in sex. Its Latin etymology ("innermost"), which it shares with its homograph "to intimate," is more telling still. It is "sexual relations" and "familiarity" taken as an "indirect sign" of what is racially "innermost" that locates intimacy so strategically in imperial politics and why colonial administrations worried over its consequence and course.

As in any intellectual venture, the questions that inform this book are and are not my own. Studies of the colonial over the last decade have been shaped by political economy, feminism, and cultural Marxism. Alternatively, one might locate the range of questions that have animated colonial studies in the convergence of a new cultural history, subaltern studies, and new approaches to historical ethnography. Another possibility would be to trace deeper genealogies of the political and the intimate through Fanon, Freud, and the biopolitics of Foucault.⁷ However differently interest in the intimate is mapped, this work reflects a basic commitment to identifying the political stakes lodged in what is defined as public or private, to studying the quotidian shaping of racialized colonial worlds and their disparate sites of production. These approaches take the creation of specific kinds of subjects and bodies to be fundamental to the making of a body politic. Most treat the racial and sexual politics of empire as a history of the present with reverberating post-colonial effects.⁸

But what student of colonialism at the beginning of the twenty-first century would imagine it to be otherwise? If some questions I raise here are yet to be addressed, others are starting points in colonial studies today. No longer fixed on the colonized alone, colonial studies has increasingly

been concerned with historical variability in the making of racialized categories. No longer convinced that colonialism was a successful hegemonic project, students of colonial histories now direct their archival energies to the instabilities and vulnerabilities of colonial regimes, to the internal conflicts among those who ruled, and to the divergent and diverse practices among them. As this book suggests, few students of the colonial would claim that colonialism was more an economic venture than a cultural one or that studies of the colonial can be bracketed from the making of the modern, of Europe and its nation-making projects. No one would claim that colonial effects were confined to areas of physical conquest alone.

Critical colonial studies, or the “new imperial history,” starts from the premise that colonizing bodies and minds was a sustained, systemic, and incomplete political project in colonial regions *and* in Europe. In a range of colonial contexts, that project has come to be seen as one with unanticipated effects. In the end, there was no panoptic imperial state but only a partially realized range of efforts to specify the use of and access to public space and to dictate which cultural affinities and styles, and what distribution of affections, would prevail in the street and in the home.⁹

A feminist-informed cultural studies places questions of homo- and heterosexual arrangements and identities not as the seedy underside of imperial history—as Britain or France’s dirty secret exported to the colonies—but as charged sites of its tensions.¹⁰ Studies of gender, empire, and colonial sexualities are no longer a cottage industry but a major one, evident in the staggering range of subjects and sensibilities they engage and the agencies they recognize and seek to convey.¹¹ That this research moves so easily between manliness and maternity wards, breast milk and racial contamination, antislavery and feminism, paternity suits and citizenship, signals a broad rethinking of imperial effects and of those practices and persons that confirmed or subverted colonial agendas.¹² Like the broader field of colonial studies, such work bridges metropole and colony, lingering on the ambivalences of those caught on the margins of empire or in middle passage.

What marks this literature is the range of questions, methods, and sources its students have been willing to entertain. In *Social World of Batavia*—a misleadingly modest title for a luminescent book—Jean Taylor sets a standard nearly two decades ago in her portrayal of the political landscape in colonial Indonesia of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.¹³ Moving deftly between the privatized and the public, between patterns of rule and specificities of context, Taylor combined an ingenious use

of source material, eclectic methods, and exquisite craftsmanship to look at the mestizo cultural core of the Indies and the crucial part that alliances through and by women played in it. In her story of mestizo manners and macropolitics, Taylor traced family genealogies five generations deep to detail the web of kith and kin that made up the Indies' changing colonial elite. She located colonial politics in commonplaces, in markers of display and discretion in public and at home: how prominent Indies wives styled their verandas, what language they spoke in private, who slept in their beds, where they were born and buried, and where and by whom their children were raised.

Taylor's questions were Indies-specific, but her story anticipated comparative concerns in colonial studies today: how a relationship between the organization of the domestic and that of the state together shaped colonial cultures that were at once homespun and worldly, reformist and racist, and both self-identified as of a singular nation—the Netherlands—and pan-European. Her work is suggestive on another front, for it points with ethnographic subtlety to the sorts of alliances on which the Dutch colonial state was built—alliances that blurred the very boundaries created by it.¹⁴ Students of colonialism have sought to identify the ways in which the demographic demands of the state for particular kinds of colonizing populations were thwarted or supported by the range of condoned and unsanctioned domestic arrangements that colonialism itself engendered. Taylor's work, like that of Verena Stolcke's for nineteenth-century Cuba, Patricia Seed's for eighteenth-century colonial Mexico, and Raymond Smith's for the colonial West Indies, has underscored how illegitimate unions between native women and European men were woven into the fabric of colonial governance, sometimes circumventing the strictures of governance, elsewhere defining the social distinctions that colonial policy accentuated and brought into play.¹⁵

Taylor's insights remind us that colonials came in many sizes, that one's tailoring and tastes marked more than style, and that prescribed cultural distinctions were costly and not always easy to learn. Such insights are confirmed in literature, as anyone familiar with colonial belles lettres might attest. Permeable and impervious colonial categories created the pathos of colonial romance, the butt of its derisive humor, and the tragic grist of its stories. Sexual desires transgressed racial boundaries; class boundaries incited prurient desires. Undeclared affections and professed disaffections were distorted by category boundaries as they crossed and redrew those lines.

But the alienations of affection and cultural defections that so animate this literature seem to slip through our scholarly hands. Hungry for "what

happened, where, why, and when,” we brush by the sentiments that informed the colonial state’s policies—and that its form of rule, in turn, helped to produce. Unused to pushing the affective up against the political, we leave sentiments to literature, dismiss references to them as the emotive fluff rather than the real stuff of official archives.

Fiction set in colonial India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and elsewhere is peopled with subjects who made much of their rightful class and national and racial membership while deriding the unrightful inclusion of others—but who were unsure where they themselves were “at home” and most belonged.¹⁶ Madelon Székely-Lulofs’s novels of a Sumatran planter’s wife in the 1930s, Rudyard Kipling’s chameleonic and restless Kim, Marguerite Duras’s descriptions of a dysfunctional and impoverished French *colon* family outside Saigon, Louis Couperus’s story of the indiscretions and breakdown of a Dutch Indische colonial family and its patriarch’s ruin, Pramoedya Ananta Toer’s chronicle of being native, educated, and out of place in late colonial Java, and George Orwell’s district officer in colonial Burma who fears being mocked in “Shooting an Elephant” (and pointlessly kills an elephant to avoid that fate) all have something powerful in common. All portray sensibilities, sentiments, and states of distress that remain outside our history writing, that haunt and hover on the descriptive fringes of scholarly histories of the colonial, as if evading our hermeneutic finesse.¹⁷ This is not to argue that colonialisms were more complex than we once imagined (true but trivial in itself). Rather, it is to argue that how power shaped the production of sentiments and vice versa is a subject that still begs for more analytic attention. We need to dwell in the disquiets, in the antipathies, estrangements, yearnings, and resentments that constrained colonial policies and people’s actions, compelled their fears, and shaped what they imagined they should but could not do.

Colonialism is not *a* story, nor do I tell one. Instead, these chapters explore a set of interconnected and intersecting plots. Like that field of carnality and colonialism itself, they move across disciplines, understanding the colonial through a range of sources, locating colonial effects in microsites and at times unexpected domains. What did it mean to be “European” for colonials who had never set foot in the Netherlands, England, or France? How could children identify with a Dutch homeland when many spoke Dutch less often and with less ease than they did Malay or Javanese? How fixed was the notion of being “European” if a Dutch woman who chose to marry a native man could lose her Dutch citizenry rights because of that desire?

These chapters treat contingent and changing affiliations of colonizer and colonized, European and white, as political subjects—objects of criti-

cal history rather than givens of analysis. From this vantage point, they reconsider the spaces of colonial governance: why some intimate sites were more politically charged and relevant to rule than others and thus what we may count as colonialism's archival terrain. Each offers too a reminder that in histories situated on the peripheries of empire where "whiteness" was a palpable obsession, the crafting of chromatic identities has long been a troubled subject. Studies of whiteness have mushroomed in mainstream social science over the past decade, but feminists studying empire have dealt with anxieties concerning the definition of whiteness for a longer time.¹⁸

SITUATING THE CHAPTERS:
MOVEMENTS IN COLONIAL STUDIES

Chapter 2 begins an argument that informs all the chapters that follow and that has become a departure point of colonial studies today. Looking back over the anthropology of colonialism in the 1970s and 1980s, it argues that students of colonialism, anthropologists in particular, have taken the politically constructed dichotomy colonizer/colonized as a given rather than as a historically shifting pair of social categories that needs to be explained. It treats racism as a central organizing principle of European communities in the colonies, arguing that racial thinking was part of a critical, class-based logic that differentiated between native and European and that was part of the apparatus that kept potentially subversive white colonials in line. The representation of colonialism as white rule rather than class power had framed my earlier work on the tensions between "European underlings" and Sumatra's plantation elite.¹⁹ But this piece differs in making explicit the argument that race was a primary and protean category for colonial capitalism and that managing the domestic was crucial to it.

Researched and written in the mid-1980s, chapter 2 argues for a deeper historical engagement with the range of practices in which racisms were produced and thus with the cultural framing of political categories. It treats colonial discourses as more than a reflection or legitimation of European power but as a site of its production, taking up Edward Said's call to examine the taxonomic conventions of colonial knowledge, how those conventions have shaped contemporary scholarship, and why students of colonialism had not sought to ask about them. It takes Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities," by which he had characterized the social and political networks of anticolonial (and other) nationalisms, to track the movements and imaginings of a different population: the perceptions and practices that policed the

membership criteria among European colonials themselves. In focusing on the internal structures of colonial authority and the dissensions that were disallowed, it registers recognition of the sustained political and cultural work that went into crafting the layered distinctions of colonial rule and its moving categories. In thinking through these issues, while often buried under piles of plantation archives, labor histories, Said's *Orientalism*, and Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, George Lakoff's study of categories, *Women, Fire and Other Dangerous Things*, was never far from my desk.

An ethnographic history, this chapter tells a story of the plantation industry in North Sumatra whose contemporary landscape could be traced through its history of contested categories: over what and who were defined as politically dangerous and what and who were not, over company policies on "family formation" that restricted marriage and condoned concubinage for some while encouraging marriage for others. Such policies produced skewed and tense gender dynamics with racialized effects that pitted Chinese workers against Javanese, Javanese against Dutch, and Europeans against Europeans. It subjected women, both Javanese and European, and the ratio of women to men to intense regulation in the industry's strategies of labor control. Finally, in questioning the lack of consensus within the European community, "Rethinking Colonial Categories" invites the reader to look to the vulnerabilities of European hegemony and the cultural ground on which it fashioned its unities.

The title piece, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power," takes up the intimate from yet another perspective: it treats sexual matters not as a metaphor for colonial inequities but as foundational to the material terms in which colonial projects were carried out. I ask explicitly why such projects were riveted on the intimate and so concerned about sex. The piece was written during a year I lived in Paris, in the shadow of the Bibliothèque Nationale and its nearby nineteenth-century arcades, when I first consciously took in the fact that so many of Paris's quintessentially modern and "European" architectural feats were colonial artifacts, principally funded as colonial displays. I read Duras's *The Sea Wall* over and over that year and imagined that if one could so viscerally taste the white underside of colonial Vietnam and the pathos of mildewed and dust-covered lives in a semiautobiographical novel of growing up poor, enraged, and white in 1930s Indochina, the historiography would be rich as well.

But French scholarship on Indochina was then and often remains marked by a stubborn colonial aphasia, with room for little else than the chic, cool white linen nostalgia Catherine Deneuve embodies in the film *Indochine* and the steamier pedophilic pleasures of Duras's more recent book made

into the colonial soft porn film *The Lover*. That nostalgia is in striking contrast to the stark and sinister picture Duras paints in *The Sea Wall*, where in 1950 she described whites in the colonies:

[They] learned to wear the Colonial uniform, suits of spotless white, the color of immunity and innocence[,] ... white on white, making distinctions among themselves and between themselves and the others who were not white. ... White is, in effect, a color very easily soiled. Thus the whites became ever whiter, taking their baths and their siestas in the cool gloom of their villas, behaving much as do great beasts of prey, beasts with sleek and fragile pelts.²⁰

The anthropology of French colonialism has steered clear of the cultural distinctions that made up Duras's racialized landscape and has rarely touched on the social relations that allowed for such sensibilities or their postcolonial effects. Ethnographic history at the time was a study of the colonized. Similarly, historians of French colonialism have looked at colonial policy and its local consequences, not at the kinds of racialized subjects and practices created by that politics. Attention to the "pluriculturelle" (the 1980s version of French "multiculturalism") encouraged studies of immigration as a "modern" problem rather than a (post)colonial phenomenon. The colonial politics of race that produced policies on concubinage and gave rise to orphanages for abandoned mixed-blood children was deemed outside of national history. By bracketing the history of colonial racism, the popularity of the National Front's extreme Right racism in the 1990s could be dismissed as aberrant in France's social history rather than as part and parcel of the extensive and explicit colonial debates over citizenship rights and *métissage*.²¹ Frantz Fanon's work on colonial sexualities in the 1950s was taken as a political manifesto for revolution (which it was), not as a lesson in critical methodology. Albert Memmi's insistence (also written during the Algerian war) that colonialism produced both colonizer and colonized in the stylized movements of the everyday had more political impact than historical resonance. As a pointed reflection on the acute psychological and political dilemma of colonial relationships, its currency was among historians of the colonial in Britain and the United States.²² In France, Memmi's concerns were not those of ethnography. The intimate interface of colonial relations was still the stuff of fiction and not yet on the historian's or ethnographer's agenda.

The aphasia has been deep. At the colonial archives in Aix-en-Provence, which I first visited in 1987, the contents of dossiers cataloged in the colonial registries dealing with "the traffic in women in Saigon," "the regulation of