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I appreciate the time that Patricia Grimshaw, Isabelle Merle, and Bruce Kapferer have taken to review *Colonialism's Culture.*

I am flattered by Patricia Grimshaw's praise for the book. She finds generously that while little is said directly about gender and sexuality in colonial cultures, the book opens pathways for feminist scholarship. When I wrote the book I felt that this area needed to be addressed more explicitly but somehow (over the course of several fairly tortuous revisions) never found a way of doing this. In restrospect, the gendering of racial types, nationalities, polities, and regions in colonial discourses perhaps seemed too obvious a theme to devote much space to. It would have been easy to harp on the feminization of oriental despots and the masculinized populations of head-hunters, but these seemed static stereotypes of the kind I was concerned to get away from. Rather than further catalogue "images of the other," I sought to identify certain plots in narratives of colonial relations, which worked not only with particular constructions of indigenous and colonized peoples, but also with notions of past and future, progressions and destinies.

Certainly, the gender coding of populations and colonial relations is vital and energizing. What I attempted to show with the Methodist mission case study, however, was that the defining metaphors of this sort were not limited to a male/female complementary hierarchy but rather incorporated a larger field of familial relations. Native peoples were infantilized, with all the fraught combination of subordination, difference, kinship, paternalistic and maternalistic love, and generational replacement that that entailed. In examining the workings of gender in the field of colonizing cultures, it seemed useful to take sexual difference less as a term in itself than as one that was combined in different ways with ideas of race, relatedness, seniority, and so on. These ideas were not of interest merely for their complexity, but because they provided a lens through which the distinctiveness of colonizing projects became evident: the missionaries' familial tropes were not shared by other kinds of colonizers.

There is, of course, much more to a gender-conscious colonial history than this. There are studies of the activities of women in particular colonial situations, of the kind Grimshaw cites. The study of masculinity is no less important, and I expand upon the brief discussion in *Colonialism Culture* of failures of imperial masculinity in a forthcoming coauthored book.[1] But here it is perhaps most useful to make a connection that was not well developed in the book. I used Johann Reinhold Forster's comparative anthropology from the late eighteenth century to exemplify the fashion in which the

"status of women" became a key index of the advancement of a population as a whole. Forster was unusual among his contemporaries in the extent to which he focused upon this, not merely as an index but also more actively as a cause of what he saw as progress toward civilization: women, in effect, might feminize and refine society.[2] Forster's writing is of great interest for what it reveals of his own time and the complexities of the eighteenth-century responses to Oceania, which have not been much illuminated by recent writing on Cook. But in the context of *Colonialism's Culture,* it would have been more important to point out that although this mode of exploring human difference gave way to more-racialized perceptions, it retained a good deal of subsequent energy, most particularly in the cultures of Christian evangelism, economic development, human rights, and so on. The identification of certain modes of denigrating women (and children) that license intervention has surely been one of the most enduring features of Western engagements with other parts of the world since the end of the eighteenth century. If this theme has been discussed in the South Asian context by Spivak and others, its ethnographic ramifications substantially remain to be addressed.

Isabelle Merle raises a number of legitimate and suggestive points. Many of her remarks implicitly or explicitly contrast the cases I discussed with those of France and New Caledonia. I can only begin by conceding that of course my arguments were limited to primarily British Empire examples; though I alluded at points to contrasting national modes of colonizing, I was more concerned to engage with differences of epoch and project. Certainly I would acknowledge that the issue of official (as opposed to missionary) assimilationism is not sufficiently explored, and I would also be interested in considering how far Maurice Leenhardt fits and does not fit with the characterization of evangelical assimilationism put forward in my book. Leenhardt is all the more interesting because he exemplifies less the destructive missionary than the one who inaugurated serious ethnographic work and created resources that served a Kanak project of cultural renaissance toward independence.

Merle finds that the case studies (of Fiji and the Solomons) fall short of effectively applying the model of studying practical colonial projects that the book advocates. I can only acknowledge that these were intended as brief exemplifications rather than extensive case studies; though both in fact were drawn from longer articles that provided a good deal of the kind of information called for.[3]

I feel that I did not make my stance regarding disciplines clear, or at least that I do not disagree at all with Merle when she suggests that much fine work has been done within history that is not reducible to unreflective em-

piricism. I take it for granted that cultural history and historically minded anthropology substantially converge, and that these disciplines, as well as others, make vital contributions to the study of colonialism in the past and the present.

I do not quite agree that the book overemphasizes the question of "the other." Although "the other," unfortunately always evoked in the singular, has certainly been overemphasized in the critical study of colonial discourse, I would not want to forgo a "core" concern "'with indigenous society," or rather with the indigenous/colonial relation. That said, I appreciate that many colonial projects were primarily preoccupied with reforming metropolitan society, or more obviously with issues of trade and profit, more than that they were a response to indigenous culture. Even when particular texts, images, or discourses were primarily a response to indigenous people and culture, they did not necessarily take them as "others" to be juxtaposed with the self in any case. One of the points of the recent edition of Forster's *Observations* (1996) is, for instance, that his discussions of Maori cannibalism, Tahitian and Tongan political forms, and the status of women encoded British and European political debates: they were not meditations on "the exotic."[4] The interplay between home and elsewhere remains one of the most fertile areas for colonial studies:

The fact that Bruce Kapferer is an exponent or sometime exponent of the sort of Dumontian anthropology that *Colonialism's Culture* was marginally concerned to criticize may explain his antipathy to the book, but it does not excuse his distortion of its arguments. One correction may suffice. The missionary postcard captioned "A Study in Black and White" is not read in a "deconstructionist," "postmodernist," or Geertzian-despite-my-intentions fashion. The analysis of that particular image in fact proceeds from historical discussion of missionary practices and projects, and their ideological ramifications. So, far from being concerned to uncrack some deep-seated cultural code, I was explicitly concerned with missionary rhetoric, which happened to be revealingly exemplified through a set of propaganda photographs; most particularly, I was concerned to contrast that rhetoric with others in circulation at the time. What was basic to the analysis, in other words, was the strategic situation of a mission relative to indigenous people and other colonial forces, not the imputed semiotics of a single image. On this point my approach is grossly misread, and the observations that follow are correspondingly irrelevant to the merits or faults of the book.

Kapferer inadvertently raises an issue of some interest, which is implicit in Merle's question about history and anthropology We agree about the importance of ethnography; and Dening, among the other historians cited by Merle, is sometimes characterized as an "ethnographic" historian. This means

reflective, sensitive to cultural complexity, and above all localized. But are these attributes sufficient to describe an ethnographic orientation toward the past that proceeds in the absence of what anthropologists would understand as the basis of ethnography, namely fieldwork? What is the adequacy in knowledge that ethnographic history seeks to mimic, and how is it to be arrived at? Can it be arrived at through archival research, or are we introducing a series of metaphors, postulating fieldwork in the library, dialogue with one's sources, and so on, that are appealing but in the end mystifying? This is one of a number of larger methodological issues that will surely continue to trouble as well as animate research on the cultures of colonialism.

NOTES

1. Nicholas Thomas and Richard Eves, *Bad Colonists: The South Seas Letters of Vernon Lee Walker and Louis Becke.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming.

2. Harriet Guest, "Looking at Women: Forster's Observations in the South Pacific," in Johann Reinhold Forster, *Observations Made during a Voyage Round the World,* ed. Nicholas Thomas, Harriet Guest, and Michael Dettelbach (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996 [orig. 17781).

3. Nicholas Thomas, "Sanitation and Seeing: The Creation of State Power in Early Colonial Fiji," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32 *(1990):* 149-170; "Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy, and History in Early Twentieth Century Evangelical Propaganda," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34 (1992): 366-389.

4. See note 2 above.