AFRICA, EMPIRE, AND ANTHROPOLOGY: A Philological Exploration of Anthropology's Heart of Darkness

Andrew Apter

*Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60637-1539;
e-mail: aapter@midway.uchicago.edu*

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■ **Abstract**   As an artifact of imperial culture, Africanist anthropology is historically associated with the colonization of Africa in ways that undermine the subdiscipline's claims of neutrality and objectivity. A critical literature on the ideological and discursive inventions of Africa by the West challenges the very possibility of Africanist anthropology, to which a variety of responses have emerged. These range from historical reexaminations of imperial discourses, colonial interactions, and fieldwork in Africa, including dialogical engagements with the very production of ethnographic texts, to a more dialectical anthropology of colonial spectacle and culture as it was coproduced and reciprocally determined in imperial centers and peripheries. Understood philologically, as an imperial palimpsest in ethnographic writing, the colonial legacy in Africanist ethnography can never be negated, but must be acknowledged under the sign of its erasure.

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I returned deliberately to the first I had seen—and there it was, black, dried, sunken, with closed eyelids, a head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole, and, with the shrunken dry lips showing a narrow white line of teeth, was smiling, too, smiling continuously at some endless and jocose dream of that eternal slumber....Rebels! What would be the next definition I was to hear? There had been enemies, criminals, workers—and these were rebels. Those rebellious heads looked very subdued to me on their sticks.

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

INTRODUCTION

In a revealing passage of his *Races of Africa*—first published in 1930 and reissued four times by 1966—Seligman quotes Dr. Wilhelm Junker on the African pygmy's "amazing talent for mimicry": "A striking proof of this was afforded by an Achua whom I had seen and measured four years previously in Rumbek, and now again met at Gam[b]ari's. His comic ways and quick movements made this little fellow the clown of our society. He imitated with marvellous fidelity the peculiarities of persons whom he had once seen; for instance the gestures and facial expressions of Jussuf Pasha...and of Haj Halil at their devotions, as well as the address and movements of Emin Pasha 'with the four eyes' (spectacles)...and now he took me off to the life, rehearsing after four years, down to the minutest details, and with surprising accuracy, my anthropometric performance when measuring his body at Rumbek" (Seligman 1966:26–27). The passage is strangely decontextualized by Seligman, with no reference to the southern Sudan, where the event took place, or even to the text in which it was originally recorded (Junker 1892:86), and it would have reflected nothing more than a typical trope of the time—i.e. the diminutive African as mimic and clown—were it not for the formidable reputations of Seligman and his collaborators, including E Gellner, EE Evans-Pritchard, P Bohannan, D Forde, M Fortes, P Kaberry, SF Nadel, DJ Stenning, J Beattie, L Mair, J Perstiany, J Barnes, M Douglas, and I Schapera listed in later editions. We cannot assume that they consciously endorsed every page of Seligman's book, but the documentary use of Junker's observations, the passage itself, and its relationship to the rest of Seligman's ethnological text exemplify the "awkward relationship" of Africanist anthropology to the politics and culture of empire more generally. Treating Seligman's quotation of Junker's text as paradigmatic of the imperial palimpsest in Africanist anthropology, I review key positions and debates shaping its theory and practice today. The philological metaphor framing this review is not merely rhetorical, but has significant methodological implications for navigating into and out of anthropology's heart of darkness.

I begin by reviewing the strongest critiques of Africanist anthropology in relation to empire because they raise fundamental challenges that must be taken into account by anyone working in the field, and they represent a growing literature that is developing in interesting ways. Somewhat polemically, in both explicit and

implicit response to these challenges, I then review a range of studies that serve to recuperate Africanist anthropology from its imperial conditions of impossibility, first by examining its dialogical dimensions, and then by illuminating the dialectics of imperial culture not only in Africa but "between metropole and colony" (Stoler & Cooper 1997). I focus mainly on British and French Africanist contexts and traditions and blur the boundary between anthropology and history.

AFRICA, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND THE COLONIAL LIBRARY

When work by Mudimbe (1988) won the Herskovits award in 1989, anthropologists working in Africa faced a rigorous theoretical challenge. Focusing on nothing less than "the foundations of discourse about Africa," Mudimbe (1988:xi) traced a genealogy of models in which representations of the African "other" functioned not as windows into another world but as signs of imperial domination. Previous scholars had already examined the connections between anthropology and colonialism in Africa. In the important collection by Asad (1973), James (1973) could cast the anthropologist in Africa as a "reluctant imperialist" capable—like Malinowski in his better moments—of openly criticizing colonial authority and policy, whereas Faris (1973) could confirm that those like Nadel were willing co-conspirators in imposing theoretical-cum-colonial order and control. In an equally important publication the previous year, Leclerc (1972) located imperial ethnocentrism at the very core of anthropological method, refined by functionalism and transformed by relativism but never transcended or erased. Indeed, the first monumental indictment of Africanist ethnography was by Leiris (1968), which first appeared as *L'Afrique fantôme* in 1934, then disappeared in 1941 by order of the Vichy regime, and reappeared in three subsequent editions (1951, 1968, 1981) as a meticulous testimony to colonial fantasy and desire (Jamin 1982a; see also Leiris 1989). In one entry, Leiris likens "l'enquête ethnographique" of the historic Dakar-Djibouti expedition (Jamin 1982b, Clifford 1983) to police interrogation, declaims the possibility of ever knowing what Africans actually think, and displaces his frustrated ethnographic desire into unconsummated lust for the racialized other: "Je n'ai jamais couché avec une femme noire. Que je suis donc resté européen!" (see Jamin 1982a:206). Clearly Leiris' "fantôme" prefigures Mudimbe's "invention" in these respects, but unlike the former poetics of documentation, the latter project was explicitly grounded in critical theory and method, posing as its central problem the location of gnosis in the order of knowledge about Africa.

As argued elsewhere (Apter 1992b), gnosis functions for Mudimbe as a duplex sign anchoring the form and content of "traditional" African philosophies within those Western discourses that purport to represent them. In other words, gnosis is both a body of secret knowledge to be mastered, and an imperial/colonial trope of authentic alterity, which, like the Holy Grail, is nobly pursued but endlessly displaced. Without denying the existence and local authority of actual African gnos-

tic systems, Mudimbe (1988:186) locates them within "a Western epistemological territory" where they remain colonized and thus beyond adequate representation and understanding. Of the African worlds portrayed by such scholarship, Mudimbe (1988:186) asks: "Is not this reality distorted in the expression of African modalities in non-African languages? Is it not inverted, modified by anthropological and philosophical categories used by specialists in dominant discourses?" Although the ethnophilosophical investigations of Griaule (1952, 1965) and Tempels (1969) are most directly attacked for reproducing the politics of paternalism in their "cultivated sympathy" (Einfühlung) for the African sage, the critique extends beyond ethnophilosophy as such to embrace virtually all Africanist ethnography, including de Heusch (1982, 1985) on symbolic functions, and Turner (1969, 1981) on social dynamics and ritual mediations, not to mention African intellectuals who remain unwitting heirs to a colonial "philosophy of conquest" (Mudimbe 1988:69). There are of course other readings and arguments in Mudimbe's rich study, with his multifaceted "idea" of Africa developed further in a sequel (Mudimbe 1994), but the problem of gnosis and the colonial library poses fundamental questions concerning the very limits of anthropological reason itself.

To illustrate, can Junker's description of a pygmy, quoted in Seligman (1966) above, be easily dismissed as a relic of an earlier ideology, or does its rupture into Seligman's discussion represent a deeper subtext in Africanist ethnography that remains hidden by various mutations and guises to this day?

On the surface, Seligman's ideological legacy among his Africanist progeny seems merely nominal. Their aforementioned names appear in a publisher's note to the third (Seligman 1957) and fourth (Seligman 1966) editions, together with their writings in an expanded bibliography, but can they be held accountable for the sins of their father (cf Kuklick 1978)? The very framework of the International African Institute's *Ethnographic Survey of Africa* series emphasized the social organization and cultural life of African peoples rather than their physical characters and racial types. But here is precisely where the conceptual elisions of Mudimbe's epistemological territory take place. How is it possible that a book entitled *Races of Africa*, with its designated diacritica of "skin colour, hair form, stature, head shape, and certain characters of the face, e.g. prognathism, and of the nose" (Seligman 1966:2–3), a book that also explicitly invokes the Hamitic hypothesis and the childlike simplicity of African languages, contains so much material on social organization, economy, burial, etc? Here the racial, linguistic, and cultural domains form an integrated whole, with the classification of racial types (Bushmen, the True Negro, Hamites, Bantu, and Semites) informing the distribution of tribes and traditions, such that society and culture are effectively subsumed by race. There is no question that Seligman's students and colleagues working in Africa disavowed such subsumptions on political and intellectual grounds, but does not an implicit racial logic—cloaked in the essentializing categories of native administration and customary law—slip unnoticed through the back door? Insofar as modern Africanist ethnography has sought pristine models of social structures (British tradition) and systems of thought (Griaule school),

has it not endorsed the fundamental objectifying, essentializing, and even implicit racializing of imperial science at large? Like Junker's pygmy breaking into Seligman's text, does the logic of racialization constitute the imperial palimpsest of modern Africanist research?

Supporting evidence for this radical thesis illustrates how implicit imperial/colonial logics and categories have been imposed on Africa and interpolated back into the precolonial past. This has occurred in two related registers that can be crudely labeled narrative and inventive. If evolutionism served as the dominant narrative paradigm in Victorian anthropology (Stocking 1987, Brantlinger 1986), supporting imperial ideas of racial difference, destiny, and hierarchy, it also provided the working guidelines for colonial officers and government anthropologists following Lugard's (1965) "dual mandate" in Africa—the uplifting of native peoples according to their natural (i.e. racial) capabilities while benefitting commerce and industry at home (Kuklick 1991). Within this British African context, the challenge posed by functionalism to evolutionary thinking could be developed by "pure scholars" unfettered by policy (and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation through the IAI), but methodological strictures notwithstanding, evolutionary thinking and its hidden racial assumptions were not so easily transcended. Functionalists could jettison pseudo-historical speculations about the undocumented histories of African peoples, replacing diffusionist and evolutionary origins with the more rigorous concept of "social function" (Radcliffe-Brown 1952:3, 12–14), but—as Fabian (1983) argued with respect to the anthropological object of knowledge at large—their societies were not only frozen in time, they also functioned implicitly as living relics of the past. Lurking beneath the genealogical and political morphologies and typologies was an evolutionary assumption, still difficult to exorcise, that acephalous societies like the Tallensi, Nuer, or Tiv were structurally more primitive than the centralized "states" that formed precolonial kingdoms and empires, and hence less advanced or capable of civilization. The tenacity of such chronotopic displacements is most clearly illustrated by the so-called Bushmen or San-speaking peoples of southern Africa, whose enduring image as stone-age hunters and gatherers providing a living museum of minimal society has been perpetuated not only by cultural ecologists and materialists (Lee 1979, Lee & Devore 1976), but also by cultural anthropologists like Sahlins (1972:1–39), who found in Bushmen "bands" a paleolithic parable of "the original affluent society." It was not until Wilmsen's definitive analysis of such images and ideologies against the historical conditions of Kalahari political economy—based on archeological, archival, and socioeconomic data of ancient trade routes and modern relations of production—that the myth of the Bushmen could be explained and debunked as a modern fiction projected back in time (Wilmsen 1989).

In the more "inventive" register of reification mentioned above, more strongly associated with British functionalism and indirect rule (Kuklick 1984, Pels 1996), we find a variety of innovations and transformations ranging from imperial pageants to customary law (Ranger 1983). We return to this range in due course, but here we focus on those colonial categories that were imposed on Africans in the

name of local tradition. As Ranger (1983:250) writes, "The most far-reaching inventions of tradition in colonial Africa took place when the Europeans believed themselves to be respecting age-old African custom. What was called customary law, customary land-rights, customary political structure, and so on, were in fact *all* invented by colonial codification." Quoting Iliffe (1979:323–24) on the creation of tribes in colonial Tanganyika, Ranger shows how the essentialized units of indirect rule retained a racial inflection: "The notion of the tribe lay at the heart of indirect rule in Tanganyika. Refining the racial thinking common in German times, administrators believed that every African belonged to a tribe, just as every European belonged to a nation.... Tribes were seen as cultural units 'possessing a common language, a single social system, and an established common law.' Their political and social systems rested on kinship. Tribal membership was hereditary. Different tribes were related genealogically.... As unusually well-informed officials knew, this stereotype bore little relation to Tanganyika's kaleidoscopic history, but it was the shifting sand on which Cameron and his disciples erected indirect rule by 'taking the tribal unit.' They had the power and created the political geography" (see Ranger 1983:250). No stronger demonstration of Mudimbe's thesis regarding the colonial invention of Africa can be found, and even if questions remain concerning the representativeness of the Tanganyikan case, its German colonial legacy, and more important the dialectical character of the inventions themselves, the example illustrates the implicit racial logic of tribal organization and classification as it was framed by colonialism and interpolated into the past. Of course customary law was not invented ex nihilo, but fixed flexible principles into written statutes that were applied in the name of the chiefs and their traditions, thereby effecting a hidden transformation of "traditional law" itself (Chanock 1985, Mann & Roberts 1991). Similarly, Amselle (1998) examines the "hardening of identities" by colonial policy rather than their invention *tout court*, developing a more accurate perspective in which "Africa is the joint invention of Africans and Europeans" (Amselle 1998:xv). But these more historically situated approaches to the codifying forms and functions of colonial governmentality in Africa do not necessarily vitiate Mudimbe's radical critique and may in fact extend it to the very methods and models of scientific anthropology operating at the time. It takes no major effort to see the formal similarities between the administrative units of indirect rule and the ethnographic classifications of Hailey (1957) and of the classics by Radcliffe-Brown & Forde (1950), Fortes & Evans-Pritchard (1940), and Forde (1954). Less obvious, however, is the significance of the role played by kinship and descent in establishing the a priori framework of tribal structure and its "comparative morphology" (Radcliffe-Brown 1952:195).

Following the Tanganyikan example of Iliffe (1979), I suggest that the racial dimensions of Victorian evolutionism and imperial pseudo-science slipped into the functionalists' obsession with kinship, descent, and genealogical method, where in a sense, function followed not only structure but also form. Despite the explicit disavowal by Radcliffe-Brown (1952) of conjectural history in favor of social function and—more to the point—his rejection of biological for social kin-

ship, forms of racial reasoning remained embedded in biological metaphors and matrices. Not only does the physiological model the social for Radcliffe-Brown (1952:188–204), it also hides within the generative matrix of kinship and the social order, masquerading beneath the axiom of amity of Fortes (1969), infusing the extensionist thesis, and even revealing its face in such unguarded moments as when Fortes (1969:309) proclaims: "I regard it as now established that the elementary components of patrifiliation and matrifiliation, and hence of agnatic, enatic, and cognatic modes of reckoning kinship are, like genes in the individual organism invariably present in all familial systems." As Smith (1973:122) observed, this view "comes dangerously close to reintroducing the confusion between biology and kinship." Does it not in fact represent Junker's pygmy popping up like a jack-in-the-box from the depths of Fortes' text? If it does, this is not to discredit Fortes' undeniable insights and achievements in Africanist ethnography and kinship studies (Goody 1995), but to show that the imperial palimpsest survives in the most unexpected places and informs the ethnographic reifications of an Africa observed.

THE CRITIQUE OF PURE COLONIALISM

I have pushed Mudimbe's thesis (1988, 1994) in a particular direction to illustrate how a putatively precolonial and hence traditional Africa has been invented by colonial structures and categories. The thesis contains a powerful critique of anthropological reason in Africa, and the argument can be illustrated historically in relation to travel narrative, missionary discourse, language standardization, colonial medicine, and cartography as well as ethnography per se (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992, Fabian 1986, Fanon 1967:121–45, Hunt 1997, Noyes 1994, Thornton 1983, White 1995). In this section, I signpost a literature that might appear to "refute" Mudimbe's epistemological reductions of Africanist anthropology to colonial discourse, but it need not and in fact should not be seen contra his position. In what follows, I attempt a synthesis of what otherwise look like counter-arguments.

Dialogics

The simplest alternatives to the radical reductions of Mudimbe (1988) belong to those studies that complicate the hegemonic picture with a range of ambiguous and ambivalent voices found within the colonizing discourses themselves. Cocks (1995), for example, shows how the rhetoric of science could be invoked to undo as well as uphold colonial policy, focusing on Wilson's (1941, 1942) criticism of the "native problem" as a case in point. Forster (1994) demonstrates a link between functionalism and the cultural nationalism of Kenyatta and Banda. Goody's (1995) somewhat rambling defense of Africanist anthropology against colonial critique takes great pains to show how the non-British funding sources and nationalities of many Africanists insulated the discipline from imperial influ-

ence and control, also revealing how anthropologists like Fortes were suspiciously regarded as "Jews" and/or "Reds." Nor did anthropologists of Africa remain obsessed with the primitive, seeking pristine models of precolonial systems. In Britain, the Manchester School had focused on the social dynamics of colonial transformations and dislocations in both town and country since the 1950s (Werbner 1984), a perspective paralleled by Balandier's "sociologie actuelle" of the "colonial situation" (Balandier 1966, 1970) in Francophone Africa.

If hegemonic discourse was not exactly monolithic, neither was it monologic. Studies of resistance have redefined various colonial situations (including patriarchal and neocolonial domination) as a dialogical encounter ranging from poetic and prophetic voices of self-expression and empowerment (Abu-Lughod 1986, Boddy 1989, Fernandez 1982, MacGaffey 1983) to signifying practices in both ritual (Comaroff 1985) and armed struggle (Lan 1985). These studies have developed frameworks for analyzing the dialogics of colonial discourse within localized political fields. Such "dialogues" take many forms, extending from explicitly discursive speech-genres and ritual languages—what we might call the study of critical locutions in Africa (Apter 1992a, 1998a; Barber 1991; Finnegan 1969; Irvine 1993; Lambek 1993)—to the mimetic appropriation (Stoller 1995, Kramer 1993) and political negotiation of colonial power and authority by socially situated actors. An important essay by Ranger (1983) discusses how Africans manipulated "invented custom" to promote a national culture, to prevent the erosion of gerontocratic authority by wage-laboring youth, to redefine gender relations, or simply to aggrandize political power. The strength of such perspectives is that they put Mudimbe's principles into historical practice, revealing that the fictions and inventions of colonial discourse and power are indeed social facts and, perhaps most important, how they become social facts. We can now read Junker's pygmy not simply as a relic of imperial racism but as the paradigmatic subaltern voice, commenting on the idiocy of imperial authority and anthropometry through a form of mimicry in which the master becomes the fool (Bhabha 1997).

Within this dialogical mode of capturing the colonial situation and its legacy in Africa, two "philological" approaches to the production of ethnographic texts establish a way of writing within and beyond the constraints of Africanist discourse. In a bold experimental initiative, which followed Mudimbe (1988) and Wilmsen (1989) in winning the Herskovits Award, Fabian (1990) produced a critical ethnography of a theatrical performance in which the anthropologist played a "leading" role. Working with a popular acting troupe in Shaba, Zaire, Fabian documented the production, direction, rehearsal and performance of a play that developed in direct response to questions he asked about the saying "Le pouvoir se mange entier, Power is eaten whole" (Fabian 1990:3). Extending the ethnography of speaking and performing to creating and fashioning through social praxis, Fabian's ethnography and the play that it in effect coproduced emerge as part of a larger communicative interaction within an evolving framework of historical, political, and cultural meanings. To a certain extent, Fabian answers the challenge of reflexive anthropology without falling into self-serving solipsism because he

incorporates his interlocutors into a performance about which, but not of which, he remains the author, although many of the middle chapters—recording rehearsal takes verbatim—make for tedious reading. What is salutary in this attempt, however, is how philology recapitulates epistemology, in that the object of ethnographic knowledge as a meaning-making activity is framed by its own textual history. At the very least, Fabian has blazed a path between the historic hegemony of imperial positivism and the self-centered penitence of ethnography "degree zero" to say something interesting about popular performance and consciousness in postcolonial Zaire. Most recently, he has extended this approach to Zairian painting and historical consciousness (Fabian 1996).

Pels (1994) has applied similar philological concerns to the production of missionary and administrative ethnographies in the Uluguru mountains of (then) Eastern Tanganyika, examining the textual production of "tribal" traditions in terms of "the complex interplay of colonizing and resisting strategies and the hybrid co-production of knowledge which results from it" (Pels 1994:345). Distinguishing three phases of these processes—the *préterrain* of power relationships in the field, the "ethnographic occasion" or socially organized encounter between observing ethnographer and natives observed, and the "writing up" of field notes into the ethnographic traditions of ethnographic texts—Pels reveals significant differences between administrative and missionary methods and genres. Whereas the former invented tribal histories and chiefs within a "pidgin politics that kept the *Realpolitik* of Luguru big men and lineages out of bureaucratic procedure" (Pels 1994:336), the latter "aimed at the selection and transformation of assumed parts of social practice, not at the preservation of assumed wholes" (Pels 1994:339), focusing on life cycles, economy, magic, and healing. Not only does comparison of these genres, taken as processes of textual production, complicate the colonial picture on both sides of the imperial divide, but more important, it shows how the *préterrain* shaped ethnographic encounters that in turn overdetermined the ethnographic "facts," and how these facts subsequently circulated to serve the interests and agendas of colonizers and colonized alike.

Dialectics

The colonial library acquires a new significance within such a philological turn, introducing a more socially grounded appreciation of how colonial inventions of Africa have been coproduced to become sociocultural realities. At issue is not whether the colonial figures and categories of Africanist discourse should be (or ever could be) abandoned, but how they have been indigenized, Africanized, and in some cases even nationalized through processes of ethnographic writing and representation. Whatever weight we may attribute to the role of anthropology as such in colonizing Africa, ranging from considerable (Kuklick 1991; cf Goody 1995:191–208) to trivial (Asad 1991:315), its location within the larger contexts of imperial politics, science, and culture can be seen as an advantage rather than a liability. Turning anthropology on its own imperial culture introduces a measure of reflexivity that, far from undermining the discipline's knowledge claims, underscores them with self-conscious recognition. From this more object-

oriented perspective, a growing body of scholarship has emerged to illuminate the development of imperial cultures and their political configurations in the colonies. In brief, colonial anthropology has given rise to an anthropology of colonialism.

Key texts that chart the course of this development (Callaway 1987; Mitchell 1991; Hansen 1989, 1992; Cooper & Stoler 1997; Comaroff & Comaroff 1991, 1992, 1997) are complemented by work on imperial ritual and colonial optics (Coombes 1994, Geary 1988, Edwards 1992). These and other numerous studies of colonial cultures and encounters in Africa engage a vast historical and theoretical territory that can be characterized with reference to certain paradigmatic positions and breakthroughs in research. In a study of European women in Colonial Nigeria, for example, Callaway brings together insights on "the theatre of empire" (1987:55)—like the durbar, installation ceremonies, Empire Day parades, staged arrivals and departures, and more quotidian routines of dining and dressing—with the renegotiation of gender roles and relations both within and between European and African social categories, enhancing female professional autonomy among the former while diminishing it among the latter. Developing a nuanced notion of imperial culture that includes official ideologies of gender and race, male fantasies of heroic conquest, and the political cosmology of lived space, Callaway's study represents one of the first systematic anthropological approaches to social distinctions and practices among Europeans in Africa, revealing female visions and voices that tell another story of empire behind the scenes (see also Kirk-Greene 1985). This perspective is important not only because it explains how the "trappings" of power were central to establishing colonial authority, but because it highlights the dynamics of domesticity in colonial life before and after the war. If the former theme is brilliantly developed in Mitchell's (1991) analysis of imperial spectacle, illuminating how a visual ontology of colonial representation valued the exhibition above the "original," the latter is elaborated in an important collection by Hansen (1992), which reveals how gender, race, and class were historically reconfigured by ideologies and practices of domesticity that include "labor and time, architecture and space, consumption and accumulation, body and clothing, diet and hygiene, and sexuality and gender" (Hansen 1992:5; see also Hansen 1989, 1997; Hunt 1997; McClintock 1995; White 1990, 1995; Wildenthal 1997). One of the major themes emerging from this literature is how the politics of imperial culture in Africa belonged part and parcel to politics in the metropoles, as centers and peripheries developed historically and dialectically. This theme breaks down into two significant variations: imperial spectacle and colonial conversions.

Imperial Spectacle   If research on colonial expositions and industrial world's fairs has blossomed over the past two decades, revealing how spectacular displays of commodities and racial hierarchies represented the imperial order of things (Benedict 1983; Bennett 1996; Celik 1992; Celik & Kinney 1990; Corbey 1993; Greenhalgh 1988; Hinsley 1991; Leprun 1986; Rasool & Witz 1993; Rydell 1984, 1993; Silverman 1977), recent studies have begun to unpack the "dia-

lectics of seeing" (Buck-Morss 1991) in relation to commodity fetishism and its value forms. We know, for instance, that anthropologists were consulted to showcase scientific knowledge in native displays, even publishing voluminous ethnographies for such events to educate the public and ratify its progressive place in the world. We can also appreciate how the metropolitan centers remade themselves in the images of their colonized others, by way of explicit contrasts between civilization and barbarism as well as by the implicit assimilation of "the savage within" (Kuklick 1991). Indeed, the grand era of colonial expositions, from London's Crystal Palace of 1851 to the Exposition Coloniale Internationale of Paris in 1931, literally and figuratively staged Europe's civilizing mission in Africa, producing knowledge of the territories for domestic consumption while exporting models of trusteeship and enlightenment abroad. But if European centers and their African colonies were so intimately imbricated in each other's images, such connections were not limited to material interest and strategic intent; they also spoke to an ontological transformation of "the real." Here Mitchell (1991) achieves an important breakthrough in analyzing colonial power and representation. Beginning with Egypt at the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris, he identifies a revealing optical illusion whereby an exhibited Egypt produced in the West became more real and authentic than the land and people themselves. This inversion of simulacrum and original—a kind of commodity fetish writ large— has profound implications for understanding colonial power and statecraft. One implication is that imperial spectacles at home assume an active role in the construction of colonial overrule, not as supportive props or legitimating ideologies but as framing devices whereby models and plans become political realities with perceived truth-effects. A second implication is that such "techniques of the observer" (Crary 1990) produce the very split between colonial state and society, one that begins as an internal distinction and develops into an external boundary. From this perspective, the state is not assumed in advance or taken whole; it emerges from representational technologies and practices into an institutionally reified "domain." This insight helps us rethink the status of civil society in postcolonial Africa (see below), and it is relevant for understanding how inventions of Africa became African realities.

As two further "breakthrough" studies reveal, inventions of Africa became European realities within Britain and France as well. In a landmark study of museum displays as well as regional and national exhibitions in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, Coombes (1994) examines the relationship of "scientific" and popular knowledge of Africa to ideologies of race and national culture within Britain (for the politics of the camera, see also Street 1992, Vansina 1992, Faris 1992, Geary 1988, Prins 1992). Bringing the rise of professional anthropology—including theories of evolution and degeneration—to bear on popular forms of ethnographic display as well as on questions of aesthetics and cultural value, Coombes argues that museums and exhibitions became temples and spectacles of empire that remade the British nation and its various publics through the images and objects of its African others. Nor were such displays directed exclusively to a national public sphere. They also redirected didactic attention to mater-

nal and wifely obligations in the private sphere by invoking the African woman as an object lesson against "feminist tendencies amongst white British women" (Coombes 1994:99–100). It is within this contrapuntal development of professional knowledge and popular imagination, of British racial and cultural unification and African racial and cultural classification, that the categories of Mudimbe's colonial library were forged and refined, and the grammar of its selections and substitutions set into historical motion. Although more global in its imperial scope, Lebovics (1992) reveals a similar dialectic at work in France, relating debates and divisions between physical anthropologists and ethnologists to the location of Africans, and indeed Franks and Gauls, within the shifting boundaries and policies of nation and empire. Examining the colonial exposition as "the simulacrum of greater France," Lebovics (1992:67) argues that it not only promoted an imperial consciousness and a new sense of national identity at home, it also produced "a governing ideal" that recognized "the wrapping of cultures around a French core as a kind of mutual apprenticeship in citizenship: on the one side natives learning to be French while of course retaining their local customs; on the other European French, recalling their own apprenticeships as Gascons or Bretons, learning to welcome the new French" (Lebovics 1992:79). That this ideal diverged dramatically from the realities of racism and corvée labor need not disrupt the truth-effects of the governing discourse, in that—following the insight of Mitchell (1991)—the simulacrum surpasses the original within the political ontology of imperial spectacle.

Colonial Conversions   Understood as a mode of objectification and even fetishism grounded in colonial relations of production (McClintock 1995), imperial discourses and spectacles of Africa defined centers and peripheries, citizens and subjects (Mandami 1996), through the camera obscura of class. If European class relations were mapped onto race relations abroad, projecting the dislocations of the industrial revolution onto the savagery and heathenism of the dark continent, class differences at home were increasingly cast in racial terms as well. Moreover, the class-race axis was further transposed into gender, religious, and national differences—and discriminations of "sexuality and sentiment" (Cooper & Stoler 1997:26)—forming an emergent imperial culture at large. Here is where historical anthropology and anthropological history converge. Focusing on Tswana encounters ca 1820–1920 with non-conformist Christian missionaries in South Africa, Comaroff & Comaroff (1991) wrote a nuanced historical ethnography of the cultural forms of conversion and domination, showing how the "colonization of consciousness" through religious rhetoric and quotidian reform led to the "consciousness of colonization" ranging from embodied poetics to overt political struggle. Crucial to their analysis in this volume is a model of how hegemony and ideology—seen as two ends of a continuum—operate reciprocally within a cultural field, bringing implicit cultural form (which remains unconscious or dimly apprehended) and more explicit meaning or content (more consciously grasped) to bear on the symbolic and material production of the social world, not through endless mechanical reproduction, but dynamically, in relation to shifting align-

ments and struggles. One of the strengths of this formulation is that it opens up the gray area between domination and resistance in the ambivalent and hybrid terms with which Tswana experienced the colonial encounter, thereby accounting for how they responded, ranging from struggles over space and time to struggles over words and water. In more historical terms, the study shows how the class position of the Wesleyan missionaries on the "social margins" of bourgeois Britain engendered (in both senses of the term) a pastoral vision of the African landscape and the cultivation of its gardens and souls, placing them at odds with dominant factions of the colonial elite (Stoler & Cooper 1997:27) and gradually giving rise, through its imposition on the Tswana, to a growing "sense of opposition between *sekgoa* (European ways) and *setswana* (Tswana ways), the latter being perceived for the first time as a *system* of practices" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:212). Here we see how the colonial encounter produced the very opposition that more conventional anthropology and historiography presupposes, reifying a Tswana culture of language, law, and custom that the Tswana themselves came to recognize and appropriate (for a comparable dialectic in colonial Tanganyika, see Pels 1999).

Within the broader dialectics of center and periphery, Comaroff & Comaroff (1992) relate evangelical models of bodily and household reform—promoting nuclear homes for the more cultivated Tswana Christians—to the politics of domestic reform in Britain, where the "dangerous classes" and their squalid slums would be tamed and cleansed by enlightened social policy. In Comaroff & Comaroff (1997), these themes are extended and expanded to the reordering of public space through architecture and town planning (see also Wright 1997), the recasting of public and private domains, bourgeois self-fashioning, the moral and material "currencies of conversion," the commodified forms and signs of salvation, and the emerging racial and gender ideologies that characterize a bourgeois modernity not simply imposed or resisted but reciprocally determined by the imperial center and its colonial frontier. In a methodological shift that resembles the critical optics of Mitchell (1991) by revealing how internal distinctions materialize into the external boundaries of social order and meaningful space, the Comaroffs solve the problem of the colonial library by taking the development of its genres and categories into ethnographic account. If this method works for historical anthropology, does it have a place in postcolonial Africa?

NOTES FROM THE POSTCOLONY

For Mafeje (1998) it does not. In a damning indictment of all major attempts to reinvent anthropology for a postcolonial Africa, Mafeje condemns the discipline to—at best—entropic death. Coming from a classically trained social anthropologist who produced one of the first critiques of the ideology of tribalism (Mafeje 1971), this strongly principled attack represents the most recent version of Mudimbe's more scholastic challenge, inviting a serious response.

Focusing on "the deconstruction of Anthropology with reference to the excolonial world," Mafeje (1998:1) makes the case that whatever the pretensions of

liberal apologists and revisionists from "the North," African scholars today should dispense with the discipline. Caught in the double bind of either reproducing colonial reifications or losing the ethnographic referent in self-reflexive confusion, anthropology has become a lost cause for postcolonial African scholars. Reviewing, and at times excoriating, efforts to develop an adequate post-colonial anthropology (Asad 1973, Hymes 1974, Scholte 1974, Clifford & Marcus 1986, Comaroff & Comaroff 1992, Moore 1994), Mafeje is also hard on his African colleagues who seek refuge in development or alternatives in feminism or unmodified Marxism. But his solutions underscore a more general process of indigenizing the ghosts of colonialism in Africa under the guise of decolonization.

Mafeje (1991) proposes a way out of the anthropological double bind by replacing the anthropological concepts of "society" and "culture" with revised concepts of "social formation" and "ethnography." By social formation, Mafeje departs from standard Marxian modes of articulation to specify "the articulation of the economic instance and the instance of power," a move that brings politics into the "base" to recast "kingdoms" more historically in relation to colonialism. From this perspective, what matters is "not which people were called Ba-Nyoro, Ba-Ganda, Ba-Hindi, Ba-Hutu, Ba-Tutsi, etc., but what they were actually doing in their attempts to assert themselves" (Mafeje 1998:36). Such a perspective is useful if not entirely original, given studies of cultural ethnogenesis as a historical and sociopolitical process (Amselle 1985, Peel 1989), but more unusual is his notion of ethnography, referring to those texts authored by the people themselves in the course of their social struggles and identity politics, as well as the rules of social discourse underlying such textual production. It is up to the social scientist to relate the "ethnography" of native (and nativist) discourse to the historical dynamics of the social formation, and thus to disclose its "hidden" significance: "As I conceive of it, ethnography is an end product of social texts authored by the people themselves. All I do is to study the texts so that I can decode them, make their meaning apparent or understandable to me as an interlocutor or [?] the 'other.' What I convey to my fellow-social scientists is studied and systematised interpretations of existing but hidden knowledge" (Mafeje 1998:37). There are several ironies in this revisionist reversal of an ethnography without anthropology, not least of which is the nearly full-circle return to Mudimbe's model of gnosis—the hidden knowledge produced by the other and revealed by the ethnographer—that characterized the ethnophilosophical illusion of the colonial library. Mafeje (1998:37) actually cites Griaule for establishing an appropriate methodological precedent for his ethnographic elicitations. But what is of interest are the philological dimensions of Mafeje's solution and its logic of indigenization.

Briefly stated, Mafeje's dismissal of Africanist anthropology as inseparable from the colonial politics of knowledge actually relocates it in the historical terrain [or *préterrain* (Pels 1994)] of the social formation, and in the cultural domain of what he now calls ethnography. Like Monsieur Jourdain with his prose, Africans now learn that they have been speaking ethnography all of their lives!

Whether generated "through conversation, as Griaule or Dumont did, or through interviews, recordings, participant observation, oral traditions, artistic expressions, or written accounts, is immaterial," Mafeje (1998:37) maintains, because these discourses constitute prima facie knowledge production as ethnographic texts unto themselves. By taking the anthropological concept of culture out of ethnography, the resulting social science is cleansed of its colonial accretions. But is it really? Has not the colonial palimpsest of the culture concept slipped into the native voice under the sign of its erasure? Mafeje has indigenized the concept of culture by displacing it into a textual model that actually remains complex, embracing both the explicit enunciations of ethnic identity politics and the implicit grammars of their production. And it is at these deeper levels of discursive and textual production that something between a social formation and an invented ethnic identity—namely culture—resides. Junker's pygmy is still clowning around despite the most vigilant efforts to exorcise his ghost.

Mafeje's argument is particularly interesting because it represents a philological variation of the decolonization paradigm in African studies and cultural production. Variously represented by négritude (Senghor 1964; Diop 1987, 1991), Pan-Africanism (Thompson 1974, Esedebe 1982, Padmore 1971), or African personality or consciencism (Nkrumah 1970) and summarized succinctly by Ngugi (1986), the paradigm maintains that true liberation from colonial and neocolonial domination requires a "cultural decolonization [which] has yet to be accomplished" (Stoler & Cooper 1997:33). My meta-critique of Mafeje (1998), however, suggests that we pay close ethnographic attention to what goes on under the guise of cultural decolonization. What we find behind different strategies of cultural production and recuperation is the indigenization of colonial culture itself, such that its structures, categories, and even rituals of incorporation become Africanized as local, regional, national, or even Pan-African traditions.

For example, the durbar ceremony celebrated with such fanfare in Nigeria during FESTAC '77 (the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture) actually reproduced a central ritual of colonial overrule that had developed in India and was adapted by Lugard to northern Nigerian conditions and practices (Apter 1999). This is not to deny the indigenous dimensions of Nigerian durbars, like the *jafi* salute, which colonial durbars appropriated, but to underscore their historical development as rituals of colonial subjugation. What is interesting anthropologically is how the very decolonization of cultural tradition based on the rejection of imperialism proclaimed by FESTAC involved the nationalization of colonial tradition by the postcolonial state. Explicitly erased, such traditions as the durbar and regatta were indigenized through the very festivals and ministries that objectified culture for citizens and tourists (for a Francophone example of this process, see Austen 1992). Here we see in reverse, as it were, the colonial palimpsest in postcolonial Africa, mirroring anthropological history in its spectacular productions of a precolonial past. My point is not that cultural decolonization has yet to be accomplished, but that it cannot be accomplished by simple negation. Rather it is accomplished historically by the very processes of indigenization and nationalization, such as FESTAC's festivals and Mafeje's nonanthropologi-

cal anthropology, in which colonial forms of culture and knowledge are appropri-
ated and reinscribed by Africans. That is both a process for Africanist
anthropology to study and a practice that African anthropologists can more criti-
cally pursue.

CONCLUSION

The philological exploration of anthropology's heart of darkness has traced the
colonial palimpsest in the figure of Junker's pygmy to show that the discipline's
imperial history unfolds through the very production of ethnographic texts and
cannot be erased. In this respect, Mudimbe (1988, 1994) is correct in arguing that
this history establishes important limits on the practice of Africanist anthropol-
ogy. But when anthropology examines this history, as in the work reviewed
above, it deepens our understanding of the colonial encounter itself, providing a
dialectical perspective in which imperial centers and colonial peripheries devel-
oped in reciprocal determination. As new research is beginning to reveal (Apter
1998b, Comaroff & Comaroff 1999, Cooper 1994, 1997, Mandani 1996, Werbner
1998, Werbner & Ranger 1996), this approach applies to studies of civil society
and the public sphere in postcolonial Africa as well, in that the very historical
development of civility and publicity in bourgeois Europe was part of the "civiliz-
ing mission" in Africa, where—for better and worse—a new realm of res publica
was forged that today sets the stage for democratization and political struggle.

Returning to Junker's African exploits, however, there are other relics of an
imperial history, less loquacious if no less eloquent than the pygmy at Rumbek,
that are buried even deeper in the archives of colonial memory. Describing his
travels and tribulations, Junker (1892) records one appropriately "gruesome"
event that he experienced in the service of natural science: "I had already taught
Dsumbe how to prepare skeletons of mammals, and this work was now again
taken in hand.... These collections were now enriched by the gruesome present of
a number of human heads. I had merely given a general order to procure bleached
skulls, should the occasion present itself. But Zemio's people having once made a
raid on some unruly A-Kahle people, those who fell were beheaded, and the heads
not eaten, as is customary, but brought to me. I had them for the present buried in a
certain place, and after my next journey prepared for the collection" (Junker
1892:160–61). Junker's sketch (Figure 1) adds documentary force to this "grue-
some gift," ostensibly illustrating African cannibalism and savagery but also
implicating the European explorer in the very same crimes—framed by exchange
relations and modes of accumulation—which remain the hidden hallmark of
anthropology's heart of darkness. What is so remarkable about Junker's heads is
not just the cavalier violence of their collection and preparation, but the fact that
Junker actually took them home to Europe. These heads, bearing silent testimony
to European cannibalism and savagery in Africa, remind us that if anthropology's
imperial subtexts are to be acknowledged, they cannot be forgotten (Trouillot
1995).

A GRUESOME GIFT.

Figure 1   Human heads brought to Dr. Wilhelm Junker for his scientific collection. From Junker (1892:161).

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