

ONE WHERE IS HERE?

It is hard to know what to do about a world beset by struggles of ethnic nationalism, hardening of racial lines, and staggering divides between wealth and poverty. For my part as a teacher, I have to wonder at what we are to teach the young about such a world. How do we help them understand why differences of color and culture, gender and nationality continue to have such profound consequences? It won't do to fall back on the old lessons, to tell students that such differences are simply a fact of life, to tell them that the suspicion and distrust with which these differences are often regarded are the product of sheer ignorance. They are unlikely to be reassured that only for want of an education much like the one they are receiving, the world suffers such discord and division. They might, however, appreciate how this faith in education would help teachers through their own day.

Perhaps it is time to turn the tables on education in trying to make sense of this divided world. After all, our schooling has not been so much the great redeemer of prejudices as the tireless chronicler of what divides us. Education is no small player in giving meaning to these differences. We are schooled in differences great and small, in borderlines and boundaries, in historical struggles and exotic practices, all of which extend the meaning of difference. We are taught to discriminate in both the most innocent and fateful ways so that we can appreciate the differences between civilized and primitive, West and East, first and third worlds. We become adept at identifying the distinguishing features of this country, that culture, those people. We are educated in what we take to be the true nature of difference. Yet if education can turn a studied distance between people into a fact of nature, education can also help

us appreciate how that distance has been constructed to the disadvantage of so many people. What has been learned can be learned again, and the time is right for such a project.

On June 30, 1997, the already wasted British Empire could be said to have gasped its last. Making a good show of closing one of history's great acts, Great Britain ceremoniously returned Hong Kong, the last of its major colonial outposts, to China. The territories were restored to China after 158 years of occupation, having been ceded to Britain following the infamous Opium War that revealed, among the many guises of British imperialism, the empire's role as drug pusher. Of course, the events of that final day in June were largely symbolic, as the sun had set on the British Empire long before the British government offices turned out the lights for the final time. Most of the attention was spent on what China would do with this cosmopolitan, international city. The whole thing might have been mistaken as a celebration of imperialism's accomplishment. Britain's foreign secretary during those final years, Douglas Hurd, boasted, "What we gave back at midnight on June 30 was one of the miracles of achievement in the modern world. Achievements, I hasten to add, not primarily by the British but by the people of Hong Kong" (1997).

Although minor British colonies remain to this day, from Bermuda to the Falkland Islands, the empire was not to survive the century it began at the height of its powers, when it spanned roughly a quarter of the globe in population and land mass. Britain was the largest of a series of European empires that in the last five centuries managed to annex the Western Hemisphere, foster a global slave trade, divide the African continent, and create a revolution in the arts and sciences. What so recently came to an end on Hong Kong Island in the South China Sea, in the colony that hung on the lip of the great divide between East and West, is something we will have to live with well into the next millennium. The empire is no more, in fact. Long live the Empire.

In more than one sense, the educational project of postcolonialism in the West is only beginning. Although the process of decolonization began in earnest after the Second World War with the repeated successes of the independence movements, the West has barely begun to see beyond the divisions generated by the same sensibilities that drove imperial expansion over the face of the globe. This book on education at empire's end examines one powerful source of those divisions. It is about imperialism's influence on the educated view of the world that the West cultivated during the era of empire. We need to learn again how five centuries of studying, classifying, and ordering humanity within an imperial context gave rise to peculiar and powerful ideas of

race, culture, and nation that were, in effect, conceptual instruments that the West used both to divide up and to educate the world. This can help us understand why the rather inept explorer and missionary David Livingstone insisted on having a magic lantern among the scientific instruments, clothing, and other supplies hauled by his twenty-seven porters: it wasn't enough for him to attempt to fill in the European map of Africa; he had also, as one biographer puts it, "to blind his African audiences with science and Christianity" (T. Holmes, 1993, p. 75).

Given the enormity of imperialism's educational project and its relatively recent demise, it seems only reasonable to expect that this project would live on, for many of us, as an unconscious aspect of our education. After all, the great colonial empires came to a reluctant end only during the years when I and the rest of the postwar generation were being schooled. It may take generations to realize all that lies buried in this body of knowledge as a way of knowing the world. In attempting to make a small contribution to that process, this book has postcolonial, or, perhaps more precisely, postimperial pretensions, even as it maintains a decidedly Eurocentric focus on the West's educational project for the world.¹ But then, such a contribution seems to me to be the responsibility of one who has been so thoroughly shaped by this legacy and whose work as a teacher has been to be part of its shaping of others.

I have to say that this concern with imperialism's educational project has also fostered in me an appreciation for imperialism's learned achievement. There can be little question of the scientific value of James Cook's expeditions to the Pacific and Darwin's voyage on the *Beagle* for fields as diverse as entomology and astronomy. This is not, however, all that their endeavors have to teach us. And I now realize that for every Cook and Darwin, there were thousands of other earnest and adventurous souls gathering pieces of what was seen as the great jigsaw puzzle of nature. What comes, we now have to ask, of having one's comprehension of the world so directly tied to one's conquest of it? Much of the knowledge achieved through conquest and colonization was understood to legitimate the political and cultural domination of imperialism. The resulting perspective on the world formed an educational legacy that we have now to reconsider. We cannot readily sort through and discard the

¹ See Samir Dayal for a review of "postcolonialism's possibilities," which he poses warily against the postmodern assumption that postcolonialism is the work of the "Third World": "Thus, a fundamental task for the postcolonial must be to finger these double disjunctions, to disturb the reification of a Third World as a symptom of the First World and trouble the appropriation gesture that domesticates the non-West as other" (1996, p. 124). Gayatri Spivak (1991) insists on using "neocolonial," which does not betray the continuation of colonialism in the way that "postcolonialism" does.

colonially tainted understandings we carry, without devoting attention to how our view of the world has been shaped by imperialism's educational projects, which included fostering a science and geography of race; renaming a good part of the world in homage to its adventurers' homesick sense of place; and imposing languages and literatures on the colonized in an effort to teach them why they were subservient to a born-to-rule civilization.

Given the wonderful spectacles of learning, from arboretums to zoos, that were established under imperialism's patronage, it is not hard to argue that the whole venture had about it something of a great public education project intent on bringing the world together under the roof of European learning. I think it is fair to say that what Edward Said wrote of the field of study known as orientalism is no less true of imperialism as a whole: "It is... a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts" (1978, p. 12). The educational itinerary of the extended and profoundly successful field trip of imperialism is rendered in Said's own exuberant cataloging of orientalism's scholarly project:

to dignify all knowledge collected during the colonial occupation with the title "contribution to modern learning" when the natives had neither been consulted nor treated as anything except as pretexts for a text whose usefulness was not to the natives; to feel oneself as a European in command, almost at will, of Oriental history, time, and geography; to institute new areas of specialization; to establish new disciplines; to divide, deploy, schematize, tabulate, index, and record everything in sight (and out of sight); to make out of every observable detail a generalization and out of every generalization an immutable law about the Oriental nature, temperament, mentality, custom, or type; and above all to transmute living reality into the stuff of texts, to possess (or think one possesses) actuality mainly because nothing in the Orient seems to resist one's powers. (p. 86)

This book seeks, then, to extend Said's inspiring critique of orientalism to what I am framing as the educational legacy of imperialism, a legacy that has shaped many of our ideas about education, a legacy that continues to play a small but significant part in what the young learn of the world.

The problem today is not that schools are insensitive or unresponsive to the legacy of imperialism as it takes the form, for example, of a scientifically underwritten racism. I will examine how the textbooks used in biology, history, and English classes, which once could be expected to depict stereotypical racial types and national identities, now display a new multicultural sensitivity that teaches students about race as a form of culture in social studies, whereas the topic of race has been largely dropped from their biology classes.

In English classes, students read works that movingly depict personal struggles against discrimination, without gaining any sense of how English literature was used to teach people their distance from the center of civilization. The textbooks of my own school days made it apparent that the academic disciplines were in the front lines when it came to fixing the distinctions between the natives and the Europeans; they made it clear that the educational project was about extending the gift of civilization. By ignoring how the arts and sciences have contributed to the significance of race, culture, and gender, the school leaves students to wonder how in the world these differences took on the considerable significance they still hold. This book speaks to the educated about their education in the ways of the world, and it does so on behalf of the yet-to-be-educated.

I do not imagine that such critical scrutiny will dry up the wells of racism or end the neocolonial forms of exploitation that remain imperialism's aftermath. But whatever its impact, I think that the young are owed an explanation of how such divisions have come to mean so much and of how the schooling of only a generation ago, during the final days of the colonial empires, was still teaching us to divide the world in very troubling ways. One may argue that dragging up this past can only spoil the chances that the young will start with a clean slate. Yet educators would seem obliged to consider their sources, to consider how the forces of good and evil have worked their way through education. I think we have to consider how this, too, forms part of the past that we have inherited, part of what has prevailed in our finest educational institutions. Schools have offered students little help in fathoming why this sense of difference in race, culture, and nation is so closely woven into the fabric of society. As a result, students have been relatively unaware of such government measures as the racial restriction of access to voting, immigration, and public services until not so long ago.² They need to see that such divisions have long been part of the fabric and structure of the state, including the schools, and they need to appreciate that challenging the structuring of those differences requires equally public acts of refusing their original and intended meanings.

How these sometimes subtle imperial themes of difference and identity

² In Canada, for example, a Civil Liberties Association survey on historical awareness of discrimination found that among two hundred high school students in the Toronto area, only 9 percent were aware that blacks had been refused entry to the country on the basis of race; 11 percent knew that Chinese and 32 percent that First Nations peoples had once been denied the vote; 20 percent knew of racial discrimination against Jews in immigration, business, and higher education; and 25 percent knew that there had been slavery in Canada (Grange, 1995).

continue to play themselves out in the lives of the young can be heard in the words of a group of students with whom I worked in a Vancouver high school on a study of electronic communications.³ Kathy Chin, for example, was preparing an introductory E-mail message for a student in Australia when I stopped to talk to her about the process, only to find her opening lines catching me off guard as they raised for me the issues of identity and location: "First let me tell you about myself. My parents came here from Hong Kong (I'm Chinese) about twenty years ago and I was born here in Vancouver. I have never lived anywhere else but I have traveled a lot."

The point Kathy made about who she was struck me as both banal and extraordinary. This was who *she* was, yet what she said spoke to a history that was still present for all of us. To identify oneself as having been born in Canada while remaining parenthetically Chinese echoes a colonial history that determined whose home Canada was to be, even as imperialism engaged the Chinese of the diaspora in the business of empire; it speaks to the barriers that imperialism constructed between East and West out of a compound of race, ethnicity, and nationality, as well as gender in the West's feminized conception of the Oriental as other. This may be too much to make Kathy's comments bear, but she was not alone in this self-identification; others among her classmates recognized themselves as indelibly Chinese in Canada:

As to my appearance I'm Chinese and very short 5'2", or 5'3" actually. Obviously I have long black hair parted down the middle and brown eyes. (Anne Lee)

I have black eyes and hair. As you can tell from my last name you should know that I am Chinese. . . . I was born in Taiwan and moved to Costa Rica when I was in grade two. Later when I was in grade four I moved to Canada. (Sarah Huang)

You probably wouldn't know that [I] am Chinese. I have one of the strangest names in the world, but at least if someone asked, "Where's Sterling?" nobody would say, "Sterling who?" (Sterling Tan)

What lessons should the school be teaching, I wondered, about the historical depth and intricacy of the great divide that these students continue to live out? How might it help them understand the histories carried in these innocent acts of self-identification? It was not that the question of identity

³ For a description of the project, conducted in collaboration with Lorri Neilsen, see Neilsen and Willinsky (1993); for the qualities of that communication among Japanese and Canadian students, see Greenlaw (1993). Pseudonyms are used for the students studied in this and other research projects reported in this book; the students are quoted with their permission.

was missing from the school curriculum. Students have long had lessons on who is and who is not a member of this imagined community known as Canada.⁴ These lessons do their share to make each student, in effect, "a précis of all the past," as Antonio Gramsci framed it: "For each individual is the synthesis not only of existing relations, but the history of these relations" (1971, p. 353). A strong source of light that the schools can throw on "the history of these relations," I argue, is found in reviewing imperialism's educational project.

One student in Kathy's class framed her identity in terms of ethnicity—"My ethnic background is Chinese but I was born in Vancouver and have lived here all my life" (Karen Yu)—yet there is still the strength of the contrast, established by her use of "but," of her Chinese background and her life in Vancouver.⁵ The Kiplingesque division between East and West remains firmly a part of this city's vision of itself as the gateway to the Asian Pacific, a city in which half of the students speak English as their second language. Although the city is often given to celebrating its multiculturalism, the newspaper boxes a few blocks from Kathy Chin's school are occasionally defaced with "Chinks go home," and stickers placed on telephone poles in a local suburb at one point read, "Save a Young Mind, Stop Multiculturalism." The city's leading newspaper has run headlines on the order of "Immigrants Form Pool for Disease, Doctors Say" and "Cost of Providing ESL [English as a Second Language] Classes Is Eating Up the Education Dollar." Clearly, the graffiti would be a lot easier to deal with—as messages of misguided hate and ignorance—if they did not appear to be underwritten at times by the city's newspapers and doctors.⁶

Of course, there were also students in Kathy's class who did not appear to have to face such issues:

I am 15 (turning 16 on April 7) with blonde hair and blue eyes. I'm pretty short. I was captain of the cheerleading squad for a football team. (Susan Harris)

⁴ In his insightful treatment of nations as "imagined communities," Benedict Anderson speaks of how "in everything 'natural' there is always something unchosen," as "nationness is assimilated to skin-color, gender, parentage, and birth-era—all those things one cannot help" (1983, p. 143).

⁵ On whether "Chinese" is a reference to race or ethnicity, it may be worth noting that the People's Republic of China is said to be the home of fifty-six ethnic groups (C.-C. Cheng, 1992, p. 163).

⁶ The headlines are from Wigod (1993) and Boyd (1994). This new-wave xenophobia was candidly conveyed by one Vancouverer in a nationally distributed newspaper when she wrote about the loss of her "little exclusive Anglo-Saxon world . . . [having been] replaced by a thriving Chinese community from Hong Kong, sporting BMWs and Mercedes

Hello, my name is James Statley. I live in Vancouver, British Columbia. I like sports a lot. I hate school. (Jim Statley)

My name is Robert Campbell, and I am a Libra. (Robert Campbell)

It would seem that the play of race and ethnicity in identity is not necessarily everyone's affair, and this, too, signifies a gap in the students' education. All students need to understand the historical legacy of these self-identifications. They need to see how it is that white is a color that need not name itself. No one makes this more apparent than the antiracist educator Peggy MacIntosh when she speaks of the "invisible weightless knapsack" of white privilege, out of which she pulls some twenty-six instances, including, "I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race," and, "I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group" (1990, p. 35). MacIntosh's last point strikes home all the more as this speaking-for-my-race is what I've done on behalf of Kathy Chin and her classmates, just as they have used this racial/ethnic identification out of a sense of history for which I am holding education accountable in this book.

The real issue is obviously not how Kathy and her classmates chose to identify themselves. My concern is with whether the schools can do more to help the young understand the educational formation of worldly divisions that carry with them a profound sense of who belongs where. The postimperial migration of people around the world today poses profound challenges to what we once knew and assumed of the world. Just as the changes involve Kathy Chin, I would argue, so also they include, and must become a part of the education of, her classmate Robert Campbell. He also needs to understand how the community he lives in is changing as part of a history that has long involved the sort of dislocations that first brought the Scots to Canada even as they displaced the people who had lived here for thousands of years before that. Imperialism does not tell the whole of students' stories, but it does figure in what they will learn of the world.

The Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye, whose work I focus on in chapter 9, wisely commented that that great identity question "Where is

Benzes," with the distressing irony of the colonized having profited by British colonialism. "Old houses were torn down at an unprecedented rate," Karen Krucki (1995) goes on to write, "to be replaced by 'monster houses,' huge three-level brick mansions with brick fences that now tower over hollows of older, smaller, one- or two-story Tudor style houses and cottages." Who lives in monster houses, one wants to ask, if not monsters? Chung Wong (1995) wrote back to the newspaper that house deeds in some Vancouver neighborhoods banned the sale of houses to "Orientals" until as late as 1972, an agreement that held, I have been told, for Jews as well.

here?" was less perplexing than "Who am I?" (1971a, p. 220). The geoidentity question "Where is here?"—which in Matthew Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" takes the form "And what am I, that I am here?" (1895, l. 66)—does have a way of linking our various histories as indigenes, colonials, immigrants, expatriates, tourists, citizens, refugees, and displaced persons. It is easy to see that many of the disputes that threaten the future of Canada, as well as those that concern broader questions of national identity, are about the nature of "here."

What Imperialism?

The Columbus quincentenary, celebrated a few years ago, was staged as a great marketing opportunity for blockbuster art shows and epic movies, yet for many the event amounted to what performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña called "a dance on the wound of history."⁷⁷ It was also a grim reminder of how students in the West have long been asked to honor the inflicting of that wound. We might take the familiar classroom mnemonic "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two / Columbus sailed the ocean blue" as proof of how Columbus has long been at the heart of what it means to be schooled. A new account, if not a new rhyme, of imperialism's misadventures, which has been long overdue in the schools, has begun to be written for the classroom, as I will point out presently. What also needs to be reviewed is imperialism's record of learned achievements, which was to shape our modern sensibility.

Such accounts need to begin with the often-taught pursuits of the Portuguese along the coast of Africa, Columbus in the Caribbean, the Spanish in America, Cabot and Raleigh across the Atlantic and their countrymen in India, the Dutch in Southeast Asia, and later the Germans in Africa and the Americans in the Pacific. They need to include imperialism's influence through Europe's age of exploration and the Renaissance, the founding of colonies and the Enlightenment, the opening of the Pacific and the rise of Romanticism, the Victorian age and the scramble for Africa. They need to confront a trade in human beings that forced 12 million people from sub-Saharan Africa on a deadly journey into slavery in the Western Hemisphere. They need to address the devastation of indigenous populations through military campaigns, economic exploitation, and the spread of epidemics. They also need to consider the encyclopedic project of mapping and naming all

⁷⁷ On performance artist Gómez-Peña, see Sawchuk (1992, p. 24) and chapter 3 of this book. On the "insurgent commemorations" of Columbus's voyage, see Roger Simon (1992), who deals with the challenges posed for educators by this way of celebrating history.

that the world contained, bringing it within a single system of thought. They need to realize the spread of education from the missionary schools of the New World to the universities of Japan.

Of course, the label “European imperialism” does not in any sense represent a systematic movement, a sustained campaign, or a coherent body of thought. Nowhere is this more clear than with the British Empire. Although by the turn of this century the empire encompassed more than one-quarter of the world’s people, the British liked to think that it had been acquired over a five-century period in a “fit of absence of mind,” as the British historian John Seeley put it in the last century (1884, p. 10). The empire was made up of a makeshift assortment of Crown colonies, white dominions, mandates, naval bases, trading ports, and the unique Indian raj. To name what was common to all of these arrangements is difficult, and so the term *imperialism* will have to operate as a loosely conceived historical phenomenon that covers a myriad of ventures directed at extending the dominion of Europe around the globe.⁸

At the risk, then, of lending too much coherence to the forces of European imperialism and of seeming to belittle the violence and injustice that accompanied the exploits of these “gentlemanly capitalists,” as they have been characterized, this book focuses on the activities that were conducted in the name of imperialism’s intellectual interests, which I take to be its educational project.⁹ Beginning in earnest during the eighteenth century, the research and development arm of imperialism was gradually staffed by increasingly professional cadres of geologists, naturalists, astronomers, ethnographers, philosophers, historians, geographers, painters, and poets (many of them holding day jobs as sailors, soldiers, missionaries, and bureaucrats). The whole thing resulted in a Victorian “obsession with gathering and ordering information,” as Thomas Richards describes it, that was closely connected to the “administrative core” of the British Empire through such educational institutions as the British Museum, the Royal Society, the Royal Geographic Society, the Royal Botanical Gardens, and the India Survey, as well as the universities (1993, p. 9). It produced an imaginary “imperial archive,” in Richards’s

⁸ Trying to pin down the meaning of *imperialism* gives proof to Nietzsche’s observation that “only that which has no history is definable”: “All concepts in which an entire process is semiotically concentrated elude definition; only that which has no history is definable” (1969, p. 80). Add to this the imperialist injunction “Start the forgetting machine!” which Aimé Césaire claimed accompanied too many of Europe’s colonial campaigns, and you have a sense of why imperialism offers a diffuse array of motives and intentions (1972, p. 32). On the relative lack of historical work on British imperialism, see Cannadine (1993, p. 184).

⁹ Cain and Hopkins identify imperialism’s new class of merchants and bankers that began to take shape in the early eighteenth century as “gentlemanly capitalists” (1993, p. 116).

terms, which amounted to “a fantasy of knowledge collected in the service of state and empire” that was thought capable of turning the world into a comprehensive order (p. 6). It was the duty and pleasure of these learned men and women, as this book will detail, to make the whole of the world coherent for the West by bringing all we knew of it within the imperial order of things. So it was that this order dictated all that future generations were going to learn of the world.

Today, that order may seem to be a thing of the past. The great colonial empires collapsed after the Second World War, undone by the politics of self-determination, the cold war, and transnational capitalism. A hundred nations were born, legalized segregation was declared unconstitutional in America, apartheid was finally ended in South Africa, and the Soviet Union was broken up. Transnational capital remains a global force, an imperialism of a different order, that extends beyond the scope of this book, which is taken up with the particular manifestations of the colonial legacy.¹⁰ Yet the West is still dealing directly with the colonial legacy on a number of fronts. Consider Australia, where Aborigines’ land claims met with considerable resistance until, only recently, the courts corrected one of colonialism’s great myths by conceding that the British had not found a *terra nullius*, that is, an unoccupied land, when they first arrived (Milliken, 1993). In Canada, the Quebecois and First Nations peoples are each still working on forming postcolonial associations within or apart from the dominion (and are often at odds with each other in this struggle). The First Nations peoples in Canada do not hesitate to speak of a “colonialism on trial” in addressing unsettled land claims now before the courts (Monet and Skanu’U, 1992).

In America, the legacy persists in a deepening of the “color line,” with increasing segregation in schools and discrimination in health care (“Race,” 1993; “Segregation’s Threat,” 1993). Bob Herbert (1995) writes in the *New York Times* of “a besieged black population” facing restricted voting rights, dimin-

¹⁰ Aijaz Ahmad addresses the process of decolonization as a struggle within and against the cold war and out of which has emerged what he identifies as “Super Imperialism” based on how “advanced capital has now reached a level of global self-organization” that has “given the imperialist countries a kind of unity that was inconceivable even fifty years ago” (1992, p. 313). He provides this helpful “rough periodization” for the end of colonization: “A very large number of sovereign states emerged in Asia and Africa during the twenty years after the Second World War, mainly under the hegemony of the national bourgeoisie and subordinated to regimes of advanced capital. The next decade, 1965–75, was dominated by the wars of national liberation which had a distinctly socialist trajectory, even though the level of prior economic development and the scale of imperialist devastations preempted the possibility that socialist construction would have a reasonable chance. The two phases of the anti-colonial movements were over by the mid 1970s” (p. 30).

ished affirmative action, education, and job training opportunities, and curtailed support for the poor (largely the black poor) in housing, health, and food. For Herbert, the “increasingly harrowing times” that face the African American people bear “the foul legacy of 200 years of slavery and nearly a century and half of violent and grotesque racism.” Meanwhile, a rising nativism uses the specter of an “immigration crisis” to advocate restrictive legislation for newcomers and a pitting of one minority group against another (Rayner, 1996; F. R. Lee, 1993). “The Asian invasion” (and its variations) whether in the *New Yorker* or in *Sports Illustrated*, is just one of the racial clichés that have returned to prominence (W. Wong, 1994). Immigration also preoccupies Europe, with its internal colonization of guest workers facing a rising xenophobia that sustains, for example, the demand for blood citizenship in Germany and talk of a fortress Europe, which, having made so much of the world, now closes its door to it.¹¹

Beyond the economic and political legacy of the colonial era, the West has also been busy producing a colonial nostalgic that speaks to the lost style and seeming grace of those heady days. *The African Queen*, *A Passage to India*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *Indochine* are but a few films serving up a fascination with the exotic, with Walt Disney making it a speciality. Disney’s *Aladdin* perpetuates the charmingly despotic Eastern other in a cartoonish orientalism, and *The Jungle Book* and *Pocahontas* extend the characterizations of this colorful period (Karim, 1993). Red Rose tea announces that its company’s agents “comb the backwaters of Ceylon (sic), India, and Africa in search of the most treasured tea leaves” for “tea that means the world to you.” Colonial imagery wafts through the perfume ads for Ralph Lauren’s “Safari,” and the *New York Times* spread on “Indo-Chic,” with fashions by Chanel and Armani, was shot in Vietnam, one “of the rare places where one can still experience true glamour. . . . There’s something otherworldly about the place” (O’Neill, 1993). For the home, colonial nosta-chic can be had from Domain Home Fashions: “No one went farther to make themselves comfortable than the British,” its ad explains. “From the West Indies to East India, their traditional furnishings were enriched by the tropical cultures of the colonies, and now you can reclaim this adventurous and romantic era for yourself. . . . After all, it’s your empire.”

¹¹ On immigration and citizenship restrictions, see Whitney (1996) and A. Phillips (1993). On neocolonialism, see Warren Bello (1992) on the Pacific and the new world order; Noam Chomsky (1993), who pursues American policies of imperialism without colonies per se; and Frank Furedi (1994), who discusses the moral rehabilitation of imperialism.

But if our empire has left us with the rewards of (former) membership, it has also left us with liabilities of an educational nature. Imperialism afforded lessons in how to divide the world. It taught people to read the exotic, primitive, and timeless identity of the other, whether in skin color, hair texture, or the inflections of taste and tongue. Its themes of conquering, civilizing, converting, collecting, and classifying inspired educational metaphors equally concerned with taking possession of the world—metaphors that we now have to give an account of, beginning with our own education.

Educational Accountability

In thinking about how schools are ill prepared to address the history of identities that imperialism has bestowed upon us, I think we need to begin with the intersection between imperialism’s legacy and education within our own lives. When my great-grandmother’s family arrived in America in the 1880s, they were in search of a Europe they had not been able to find in Russian Poland.¹² After centuries of internal colonization in Eastern European shtetls, the Jewish people were being depicted at the time of their emigration as a race apart from Europeans. They were said to be a “secret race” and a “nation within a nation,” as new scientists of race were obsessively given to measuring Jewish feet, noses, and gait.¹³ It hardly needs to be added that this shift culminated in the Nazi campaign to eliminate a defiled, mongrel race, a rootless Jewish nation.

Fortunately, long before the *shoah*, my family were making their way across the New World on what might be taken to be a journey away from anti-Semitism and toward whiteness.¹⁴ It often meant joining in on the displacement of others, such as American Natives and African Americans. While holding to their religion (although conversion was embraced by some), Jews sought to deracialize their family’s lives through the language they spoke and

¹² The town my great-grandmother’s family left, Grabova, now exists, as far as I can tell, only as a name engraved at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., as one of the Jewish communities that were eliminated by the Nazis.

¹³ Ella Shohat, for one, has linked this persecution to the colonial project that began to unfold in 1492: “The campaign against the Muslims and Jews, as well as against heretics and witches, made available a mammoth apparatus of racism and sexism for recycling in the newly ‘discovered’ continents” (1992–93, p. 96). On the development of a medieval colonialism through the Crusades, see Robert Ignatius Burns (1975). On racialized physiology, see Gilman (1991); and on the Jew in Victorian literature, see Ragussis (1994).

¹⁴ The racial assignation of Jewishness continues to drive anti-Semitism in, for example, the Church of Jesus Christ Aryan Nation, whose pastor, Richard Butler, publicly denounces those who fail to support the superiority of the white race as “traitors who are white outside, black inside and have Jewish minds” (Janofsky, 1995).

the education they sought.¹⁵ My mother recalls formally debating in her Saturday Hebrew school class whether Judaism was a religion or a race. She held with religion, but the racial barriers would take another generation to fall. My grandfather was barred from the post that he coveted and qualified himself for on the faculty of the University of Toronto, for as late as the 1940s there were no Jewish professors in Canada (A. I. Willinsky, 1961; Abella, 1996). In the decade leading up to the Second World War, Canada had the worst record of any nation in restricting Jewish immigration; and during the war, riots in Montreal led to the smashing of Jewish shop windows.¹⁶ While I was growing up, after the war, my parents were still not able to join the local golf and country club, but for my family these were the last such outposts of racial privilege associated with defining and maintaining the whiteness of here. Although it would not have occurred to my family to hold the forces of imperialism responsible for racial discrimination, imperialism had fostered and been well served by the science of race that through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century gave a thoroughly modern legitimacy to anti-Semitism and other forms of racism (more to follow on this).

My own education felt race-free, outside the occasional school-yard slander. Still, I kept my Jewishness protected and quiet well into my days as a schoolteacher. What could this aspect of my “background” have to do with the wonders of Western culture that I studied and ended up teaching to others? It didn’t occur to me that “the best that had been thought and said,” in Matthew Arnold’s famous phrase (1896), was based, as he also put it, on discriminating between Hebraic and Hellenic influences in favor of the glory

¹⁵ Sander Gilman portrays this urge to escape a racial identity as a form of self-hatred that could amount to a self-defeating preoccupation with the essential otherness of the Jew (1986, pp. 11–13). In his psychopathology of colonial racism, Frantz Fanon contrasts “the Jew [who] can be unknown in his Jewishness” and the African who is “overdetermined from without”; as he also puts it, “I am the slave not of the ‘idea’ that others have of me but of my own appearance” (1967, pp. 115–16). He bitterly concludes that between Jew and African, “we have one point in common. Both of us stand for evil” (p. 180). In America’s landmark school desegregation decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the psychologist Kenneth Clark’s research on racial self-hatred (1955) was used to persuade the U.S. Supreme Court that separate was not equal in education.

¹⁶ At the time, Canada’s best-loved humorist, Stephen Leacock, whose *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* remains a staple of school readers, insisted in his capacity as professor of economics at McGill University that the nation close off immigration for certain races of people: “But for continental Europe we should go slow and for some areas shut out their people as we would a bubonic plague. For all the Orient the only policy is and must be exclusion. Where we cannot marry, where we cannot worship, where we cannot eat, there we cannot live. The Eastern and Western races cannot unite. Biologists tell us that where they intermarry their progeny is an ill-joined product, two brains rattling in one skull” (1941, pp. 241–42).

that was Greece. On the rare occasions in this race-unspoken education when the Jew made an appearance, it was in the form of Shylock in my introduction to Shakespeare, or Fagin featured in my first Dickens, and there was scarcely a comment from anyone, least of all me, on what had been made of these characters. In science class, it’s true, there was the inevitable poster of the wild-haired Albert Einstein as eccentric scientist-hero. Meanwhile, I took my history and geography lessons on a world split between civilized and primitive, West and East, male and female. So, keeping my Jewishness for the Woody Allen moments in my life, I went on to make an Arnoldian education my business and my life. It must have been a common experience for teachers in current and former British colonies around the globe, except that through one generation and a terrible war, I had been freed of the racial designation.

Only now have I finally come to ask how I so eagerly acquired an education that was indifferent, where it was not negative, toward aspects of my life and generations of my family. Who was I to be, what was I to make of this culture that was not meant to be mine, a culture that had been built, after all,¹⁷ on realizing such discriminations of character and identity? I had been taught to think the world of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and D. H. Lawrence, and did—only to learn sometime later that they would have found in me a distasteful and racialized Jewishness. I realized then that I had distanced myself from the Jewish culture that T. S. Eliot and Co. did not care much for.

This critical return to what our education makes of us is one that feminist scholars have been pursuing for some time, following Virginia Woolf’s disquieting footsteps through the British Museum and Oxford University in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), all the while asking how it is that we make ourselves worthy of the West’s best arts and sciences. Such reconsideration is, of course, what one should be about as an educator, always being drawn back to one’s own never-adequate education, as if to affirm Eliot’s all too well-known lines:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Yet when I now recall these lines from *Four Quartets* (1971b), they speak both to the age of exploration and to “where we started” in a new way (“for the first time”).¹⁷ They speak to an education in who I was to be, for all appearances,

¹⁷ Cornel West, facing a similar point, allows for both a respect and a calling into question of one’s education: “Yet all evaluation—including a delight in Eliot’s poetry despite his

and who I was not to be: "What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present."

Against this historical and global backdrop of a world imagined as empire and race, I seek to achieve with this book a degree of educational accountability. Although this phrase typically refers to holding teachers responsible for student achievement scores on standardized tests, what I have in mind is that educators *owe* those they teach some *account*—if always partial—of what we have taught them about the world. The ethics of accountability, as I would cast it here, is about examining what this form of schooling has underwritten and who it has denied. It is about giving an account of education's and scholarship's role in a recent historical phenomenon that has had incalculable global ramifications. The account called for here concerns the significance of such divides as East and West, primitive and civilized; it concerns how the world has been constructed around centers and margins, and how these divisions were bolstered through forms of scholarship supported by imperialism. As I am a teacher, I owe students an account of my work within the educational project that sought to put the world together in this way. I owe them an account of why education has not done more good in the world, why it has not done more to realize fully the democratic promises that continue to underwrite public education. I owe them an account of why I remain committed to expanding the concerns of education to include this reflective and self-critical function.

What might such an account sound like? Leon Litwick, in his presidential address to the Organization of American Historians in 1987, captured the spirit of educational responsibility that I am invoking here, when he called upon historians to acknowledge that "no group of scholars was more deeply implicated in the miseducation of American youth and did more to shape the thinking of Americans about race and blacks than historians" (cited by Hughes, 1993, p. 123). This particular burden of scholarship does not fall, of course, on historians alone. It is distributed *across* the educational experiences that, in all likelihood, we and our children have gone through. However one wants to label this work—and Litwick would not use *postcolonial* to describe his position—there is a need to examine education's continuing contributions to what were and continue to be colonizing divisions of the world. Everywhere in this work there is a worrying about the consequences of knowing

reactionary politics, or a love of Zora Neale Hurston's novels despite her Republican party affiliations—is inseparable from, though not identical or reducible to, social structural analyses, moral and political judgments and the workings of a curious critical consciousness" (1990, p. 31).

that might have been inspired by the ethical compass set out in the eighteenth century by Montesquieu:

If I knew something useful to myself and detrimental to my family, I would reject it from my mind. If I knew something useful to my family but not to my homeland, I would try to forget it. If I knew something useful to my homeland and detrimental to Europe, or else useful to Europe and detrimental to Mankind, I would consider it a crime. (Cited by Kristeva, 1991, p. 130)

This book is about the accumulation of learning that proved eminently useful to Europe and often detrimental to the larger body of humanity. It is concerned with what remains of that crime, as Montesquieu would have it, in the lessons we continue to teach the young and in the way many of us still see the world.

To let students in on how their education may still be marked by European imperialism resembles the project proposed by the literary scholar Gerald Graff (1992) when he calls on scholars to "teach the conflicts." Rather than following the typical pedagogical tack of "conflict evasion," Graff recommends that university classes explore the contest of ideas that dominate public forums and scholarly enclaves.¹⁸ Perhaps the recent controversy surrounding Stanford University's Western civilization courses would be a good place to start in trying to understand the politics of imperialism's educational aftermath.¹⁹ However, when it comes to excluding dissenting voices, few institutions can best the public high school, which is the educational home to a far wider range of the public than is the university. To hold off "teaching the conflicts" of imperialism's educational legacy until college, or to treat it simply as an intellectual contest, diverts our attention from how the ideas of the primitive and the civilized become part of a commonsense division of the world by race, culture, and nation. The common sense of these divisions, I will argue, can be attributed to the success of this legacy, from primary grades to graduate school, from television's *Wild Kingdom* to *National Geographic*. This book turns to the less glamorous site of the public school because this is where most people form their ideas about history, science, literature, and other disciplines.

¹⁸ Graff's point, that the majority consensus and sense of shared culture upheld by those he identifies as "educational fundamentalists" emerged by virtue of little more than the "clubbiness" of educators and educated, is well taken. As he points out, "It is not too hard to get a consensus if you start by excluding most Jews, blacks, immigrants, women, and others who figure to make trouble" (1992, p. 58).

¹⁹ Among the accounts of the struggle at Stanford is D'Souza (1991), to which I have responded (1996).

The aim of this account giving is to afford students (and readers of this book) a critical distance from their own education, which may well, in turn, be in need of revision itself one day; the aim is to hasten and focus changes that are already under way in creating a multicultural curriculum by offering readers a review of the history and the sort of education that have brought us to this point. I do not intend the intellectual legacy of imperialism to be the whole of anyone's education, but neither should it go completely missing in a dozen years of schooling. Such teaching as I propose is not about realizing or teaching to, the true identity of the student. It is intended, rather, to help students understand their own education and the education of others as a worthy object of inquiry. Whatever criticisms of education this inquiry raises, it still reflects a faith in learning.

In writing this book, I have sifted through the rich history of imperialism, drawing on primary documents and firsthand accounts as well as contemporary polemics and advances in critical theory; I have worked with students, teachers, and textbooks in today's schools. The pattern I follow in this book is to move from the larger historical record of imperialism to specific components of today's classrooms. Along the way, I pause at the 1960s as the critical juncture when the current generation of baby boomers that swell the ranks of today's teaching force was schooled and when twenty-eight nations, from Algeria to Zaire, successfully struggled through war and diplomacy to wrest their independence from the imperial powers. It was a time when Frantz Fanon published his scathing indictment of colonialism, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963); and Great Britain attacked the UN for pursuing "a new and dangerous path" of decolonization as it pressured Portugal to grant independence to Angola, Mozambique, and Portuguese Guinea. Meanwhile, the United States was amassing some fourteen thousand military "advisers" in Vietnam while at home it faced, as *Time* put it, "the pressures of Negro revolution bursting out all over." Federal troops had to accompany African American students to school in Little Rock, Oxford, and Tuscaloosa, while two hundred thousand people gathered during the triumphant March on Washington to hear Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. tell the world, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."²⁰

²⁰ Citations are from *Time*, respectively, as follows: "United Nations: Words of Dissent," January 5, 1962, p. 25; "United Nations: Against the Last White Strongholds," August 9, 1963, p. 30; "South Viet Nam: Search for Answers," August 9, 1963, p. 30; "Civil Rights: More Anticlimax than Crisis," September 20, 1963, p. 20; "Civil Rights: The March's Meaning," September 6, 1963, pp. 15–17. This was also the year that *Time* switched from the topical heading "Races" to "Civil Rights."

To give a sense of the intellectual climate of those formative years in the education of many of us, I draw on three powerful scholarly statements in the chapters ahead: William McNeill's *The Rise of the West* (1963), Carlton Coon's *The Origin of Races* (1962), and Northrop Frye's *The Educated Imagination* (1963). Even as the European empires were dissolving, these major scholars and educators bolstered the case for a unequalled culture and race, whatever civil rights and political independence might finally be achieved in the world. Taken with Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, these works make for a fascinating intellectual moment in the legacy of a collapsing imperialism that was as important as the Beatles, dare one say, in the education of the postwar baby boom generation now assuming the reigns of power in the West. At the very least, we need to reconsider how a person coming of age in the West in those years, whether in grade school or graduate school, was raised in the aftermath of colonialism among imperial habits of mind that now need to be identified, as they might still contribute to the educated imagination.

To establish the degree to which our current ideas of education may have been influenced by the global forces of imperialism, I lay out, in the following three historical chapters, the different ways in which imperialism was bent on taking a knowing possession of the world, on setting that world on public display for the edification of the West, and on developing the principal forms of schooling that might serve both colonial state and colonized native. Having secured education's historical place in imperialism, I then begin a detailed treatment of five of the academic disciplines that have become staples of the school curriculum: history, geography, science, language, and literature. Each of these subject areas is accorded its own chapter (chaps. 5–9), which is devoted to identifying traces of the colonial imagination that form part of how we have learned to divide the world. Each chapter begins with the subject's historical formation within the age of empire, pauses over the form this legacy took during the early 1960s, and then takes a close look at the lingering elements of this legacy in today's classrooms, whether in America, Britain, Canada, or elsewhere.

Education remains a voyage of discovery, a journey in search of a larger world. So it is that the philosopher Ernst Cassirer insists, in his discussion of Rousseau, that the student "understands the world only inasmuch as he acquires and conquers it step by step" (1989, p. 119). That the age of exploration furnished the commonplace metaphors of educational rhetoric is obviously, for me, more than an imaginative borrowing. Imperialism was an educational venture that captured and captivated the imagination of the West. From its interests in tourism to interior design, the West still lives within the spell of the imperium, and what follows in this book is a disquisition on what it

might take to distance ourselves from that spell. When Toni Morrison opened her Massey lectures on American civilization at Harvard in the year of the Columbus quincentenary, she described her hope to "draw a map, so to speak, of a critical geography and use that map to open as much space for discovery as the original charting of the New World—without the mandate for conquest" (1992, p. 3). In this way, we need to grow curious about what we have made of the world, beginning with a critical geography of our own map-coloring and -labeling days in school that did so much to define our place in the world. We owe students today an account of the historical divisions out of which we have fashioned ourselves as educated people, even as we work together to move beyond our current understanding of an inexorably divided world.

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