

CHAPTER 1

“The Rot Remains”: From Ruins to Ruination

Ann Laura Stoler

Ruins of a Great House

*...A green lawn, broken by low walls of stone,
Dipped to the rivulet, and pacing, I thought next
Of men like Hawkins, Walter Raleigh, Drake,
Ancestral murderers and poets, more perplexed
In memory now by every ulcerous crime.
The world's green age then was a rotting lime
Whose stench became the charnel galleon's text.
The rot remains with us, the men are gone.
But, as dead ash is lifted in a wind
That fans the blackening ember of the mind,
My eyes burned from the ashen prose of Donne.¹*

Derek Walcott's searing eulogy to empire and its aftermath as an “ulcerous crime” captures something that seems to elude colonial histories of the present again and again. His verbs shift between multiple tenses. If the insistence is on a set of brutal finite acts in the distant slave-trading past, the process of decay is ongoing, acts of the past blacken the senses, their effects without clear termination. These crimes have been named and indicted across the globe but the eating away of less visible elements of soil and soul -- more often has not. His caustic metaphors slip and mix, juxtaposing the corrosive

degrading of matter and mind. Most critically, Walcott sounds a warning to the distracted reader too easily lost in a receding past. Proceed with caution; stay alert, the “rot remains” long after murderous men like Drake have perished, rapacious planters have turned to ash, colonial officials have returned ‘home’, and anxious white settlers have long gone. His cadence joins the acidic stench of “rotting lime” with an “ulcerous crime,” a sensory regime embodied, gouged deep in sensibilities of the present.

One could read Walcott’s fierce phrasing as the hyperbolic, enraged words of a gifted poet in a “quarrel with history,” whose metaphoric might weighs heavily against the sixteenth century slave trade, its lucrative spoils and ruinous effects.² One could lament the verbosity of scholarly depictions, pale and placid next to Walcott’s spare and piercing prose. But first reading his poem several years ago, I approached his choice of language as something more, as a harsh clarion call and a provocative challenge to name the toxic corrosions and violent accruals of colonial aftermaths, the durable forms in which they bear on the material environment and on people’s minds. Riveted on the “rot” that remains, Walcott refuses a time frame bounded by the formal legalities of imperial sovereignty over persons, places, and things. His positioning struck me as a summons and an invitation to pursue that which poems ordinarily cannot. E. Valentine Daniel’s “Epic in Verse” on the destruction of Sri Lanka, included here, is one notable exception. It too disrupts facile distinction between political history and poetic form, urging us to think differently about both the language we use to capture the tenacious hold of imperial effects and their tangible if elusive forms. In this volume, we attempt to track **the uneven temporal sedimentations** in which imperial formations leave their marks. Most

importantly, we seek to ask how empire's ruins contour and carve through the psychic and material space in which people live and what compounded layers of imperial debris do to them.

There is nothing uniform in how the volume's contributors broach the relationship between ruin and ruination -- either the opacities in which these histories reside or the visceral reckoning with landscapes and lives in which they may be traced. Gaston Gordillo, for example, takes as his very subject the uncertain political imaginaries that underwrote the disappearance and re-emergence of Spanish ruins in the Chaco region of Argentina, which obscure the parallel ruination of indigenous people and the history of their refusals to succumb to colonial conquest. John Collins explores how a Brazilian world Heritage program confuses colonial buildings and their occupants, and thus the redemption of people and the restoration of things, in ways that spur those who inhabit the ruins of Portugal's South Atlantic empire to tie together seemingly disparate strands of contemporary imperial formations and the improvement of ostensibly problematic populations. Nancy Hunt rejects "mutilation photographs" to mark the durabilities of the Belgian Congo rubber regime. She explicitly turns away from the visual field toward those of hearing and sound. Ariella Azoulay, on the other hand, fiercely embraces the visual as she attends to the concerted work of the Israeli state to create invisibilities in the visual field of Palestinian dispossession. Her analysis wrestles with the task of seeing, acts of violation for which there are no photographs able to document bodily exposures and intrusions of space. Here, debris is the built environment of Palestinian habitation, shorn of the private as Azoulay argues, unprotected by the boundaries of what the

privileged get to call home. What joins these efforts are tactical methodologies keenly attentive to the occluded, unexpected sites in which earlier imperial formations have left their bold-faced or subtle traces and in which contemporary inequities work their way through them.

A Counterpoint to Emergency

Scholarship is produced in uneven waves of reaction and anticipation, sometimes prescient about that which has not yet entered the public domain, other times struggling to keep up with seismic shifts and unanticipated events that render our observations belabored and late. Studies of empire share something of both. In the United States, reactions to September 11th 2001, the invasion of Iraq, and public revelations about the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, have moved students of colonial and imperial history to counter with unusual urgency the resurgent assertions of imperial priorities expressed through familiar and new rationales of rule that such terms as “benevolent empire” “humanitarian imperialism,” and the “new liberal empire,” were coined to convey. In response, scholars have marshaled their expertise to argue that targeted humiliations of subject populations, humanitarian intervention as offensive strategy, prolonged states of emergency, and pre-emptive military assault in the name of peace are neither aberrant nor exceptional tactics of imperial regimes but fundamental to their governing grammar.

Empires past have long served arguments about how Euro-American geopolitics

could and should comport themselves in contemporary political predicaments.³ But recent writing on empire does more than treat colonial history as a lesson plan in an analogic mode. What is striking about the current turn is how swiftly it has produced provocative and deep imperial genealogies of the present, pointed assaults on the common keywords and political concepts so often called-upon today: torture in the name of truth, displacement of targeted populations in the name of security, states of emergency to sanction violent intervention, and states of exception that justify the suspension of legal constraints and the expansion of new imperial sovereignties.

Such counter-histories have withered the conceit that the politics of compassion and humanitarianism makes for “empire-lite”: they have tracked the emergence of the U.S. “surveillance state” as one forged on the experimental terrain of counterinsurgency projects in the early twentieth century colonial Philippines; they have demonstrated that “empires of intelligence” have provided the architecture of British imperial pursuits throughout the Middle East and French empire’s “structural imperative” for militarized terror in North Africa.⁴ These revisions have been predicated in part on reassessing what constitutes contemporary colonial relations, what counts as an imperial pursuit, and which geopolitics rest on residual or reactivated imperial practices -- or have abandoned their imperious ambitions all together. Seasoned students of colonial history have been joined by a new cohort of commentators and scholars from a range of disciplines who ask about the lessons of empire and what should be garnered from them.⁵

Obviously, not all colonial and postcolonial scholarship works in such a pressing mode. If some have turned to the current immediacies of empire, there is as much that

labors to revise what constitutes the archives of imperial pursuit, to reanimate “arrested histories,” to rethink the domains of imperial governance and the forms of knowledge that evaded and refused colonial mandates to succumb, “civilize,” and serve.⁶

Still, academic debates about the lessons of empire – that first crescendoed and have since diminished as the war on Iraq intensified and was then rendered a norm – have taken a very particular direction. In the rush to account for the nature of imperial practices today and their similarities or differences from earlier European and U.S. imperial interventions, a restrictive conceptual apparatus has come to occupy dominant analytic space. Its vocabulary is aptly sharp and critical, bound by the keywords of our moment and the urgent themes to which they speak: security, disaster, defense, preparedness, states of emergency and exception.

This volume does not so much turn away from these concerns as it seeks to work through the less perceptible effects of imperial interventions and their settling into the social and material ecologies in which people live and survive. This is rarely, as Achille Mbembe insists, a matter of wholesale adaptations of colonial technologies. It is instead about re-formulations and de-formations of the crafts of governance in the management of people’s lives.⁷ We thus start from the observation that the less dramatic durabilities of duress that imperial formations produce as ongoing, persistent features of their ontologies, have been set aside as if less “at hand,” less pressing and less relevant to current global priorities and political situations than their more attention-grabbing counterparts. We attempt to broach, albeit indirectly, a set of questions not often addressed: what conditions the possibilities of some features of colonial relations

remaining more resilient, persistent, and visible than others? If “violent environments” are made so, not by a scarcity of resources but by grossly uneven reallocation of access to them, the dispossessions and dislocations that accompany those violences do not always take place in obvious and abrupt acts of assault and seizure but in more drawn out, less eventful, occluded ways.⁸ Our focus is on these more protracted imperial processes that saturate the subsoil of people’s lives and persist, sometimes subjacently, over a longer *durée*.

But the challenge is directed more broadly at a deeper set of assumptions about the relationship between colonial pasts and colonial presents, the residues that abide and are revitalized-- if in different working order today. In question is whether postcolonial studies has assumed too readily knowledge of the multiple forms in which colonial pasts bear on the present, and has been too quick to assert what is actually postcolonial in current situations. We take the opportunity to consider more carefully the physical structures, objects, and dispositions in which those histories are carried and conveyed, and not least to attend, as Daniel Miller more generally advocates, to the “unexpected capacity of objects to fade out of focus” as they “remain peripheral to our vision” and yet potent in marking partitioned lives.⁹ Rethinking and expanding how to approach the “tangible” effects of ruination is key. If the “tangible” most commonly refers to that which is “capable of being touched,” it equally refers to that which is substantial and capable of being perceived. One way to parse what motivates this venture might be its effort to identify new ways to discern and define what constitutes the tangibilities of colonial pasts and imperial presence.

Imperial Tangibilities

At issue is more than that long contested term – postcolonialism-- which may be “thinly” employed to mark a sequential moment, or the fact that people and places that have been colonized and are no longer, or thickly applied to reflect critically on when a present political reality, a set of social representations, a physical or psychological environment is considered to be shaped directly by a prior set of colonial relations. How those relations do so is sometimes precisely specified, though critics contend that they are often not --- that the age of empire is over, imperial regimes are defunct, colonialisms have been long abandoned, that political analysis and scholarship should move on as well. Some argue that an analytics committed to a searching for colonial effects has dulled what once appeared as postcolonial studies’ critical edge, that its accounts of the present are inadequate and partial, and its agents and subjects long dead, and its political charge increasingly irrelevant.¹⁰ Others argue that postcolonialism’s consolidation as an academic specialization concertedly removed from the analysis of imperialism, ensured that it “had always-already lost the plot.”¹¹ Meanwhile, conservative constituencies in Canada, France, Australia and the U.S. often take that argument elsewhere, insisting that colonial histories matter far less than they are contrived to do so; that they are called upon strategically by specific disenfranchised populations to register (unreasonable) political demands. In this view, the recourse to colonial genealogies serves to foster unfounded claims for redemption, apology, and retribution.¹²

The essays collected here defer from this latter assessment. Far more has emerged in the call to rewrite colonial genealogies, in the debates over old and new forms of imperial venture, and in the acrimonious exchanges over what counts as a colonial “legacy” and what does not. The fact that imperial forms have changed should provide a challenge, not render study of their obscured entailments obsolete. On the contrary, we take these obscured entailments and subjacent durabilities as objects of inquiry, not as given or fully understood facts. Their examination provides opportunities to unsettle well-worn formulations of imperial attributes, to consider an alternative vocabulary, and in so doing to redirect our questions. Why, for example, are Palestinian/Israeli relations, so long marginal to the dominant postcolonial scholarship, now so explicitly articulated in these terms? Why it is just now that students of Korean history are rewriting colonial accounts of the Japanese imperium and Korea’s subjugation to it? Why has the domestic history of the U.S., so long sequestered as that of a nation without empire, been exploded over the last decade by a new generation tracing policies of containment, enclosure and segregation that inextricably link the internal and external techniques of colonial rule to imperial patterns across the globe? And why have these all occurred when in some quarters something called postcolonial studies is deemed so poorly equipped to speak to the present?

Given these discrepancies, it may be more productive to embrace the uncomfortable tenor of a contemporary *malaise*. One might think of *mal-aise* here in its multiple senses of embodied disquiet, a lethargy borne of vague ill-ease. To posit that colonial situations bear on the present is not to suggest that the contemporary world can

be accounted for by colonial histories alone. It is rather to understand how those histories, despite having been so concertedly effaced, yield new damages and renewed disparities. While sources of this malaise may be over-determined, some of its sources impinge on the very issues we seek to examine here: for one, as I have argued for some time, the quintessential Victorian Indian model of empire may offer a distracting and constricted guide to imperial sovereignties of differential breadth and historical depth. Two, we might note an overly expansive sense of what we imagine to know about the tenacious qualities of empire, and what new forms of authority they tether to and inhabit. If at times colonial studies has taken the relationship between colonial pasts and postcolonial presents as self-evident, this volume does not. Finally, we question whether a skewed attentiveness to colonial memorials and *recognized* ruins may offer less purchase on where these histories lodge and what they eat through than does the cumulative debris which is so often less available to scrutiny and less accessible to chart. What joins colonial pasts and imperial presence seems to escape some of the bald-faced rubrics on which students of the colonial have come to rely. As emphasized below, our focus is less on the noun “ruin” than on “ruination” as an active ongoing process that allocates imperial debris differentially, and “to ruin” as a violent verb that unites apparently disparate moments, places, and objects.

Postcolonial scholarship has sometimes embraced a smug sense that the nature of colonial governance is a given and that we can now effortlessly move on to the more subtle complexities of the postcolonial present.¹³ Literary critic, Tony Eagleton, concurs, suggesting that postcolonial studies suffers from an “increasingly blunted” historical

sense.¹⁴ Frederick Cooper too points to a flattening of time, to analyses “unmoored” from specific relations between colonial policy and postcolonial political structures.¹⁵ What precipitates and sustains such historical “blunting” is worth pursuing further. Here we take the charge to be a vital one: to refocus on the **connective tissue** that continues to bind human potentials to degraded environments, and degraded personhoods to the material refuse of imperial projects – to the spaces redefined, to the soils turned toxic, to the relations severed between people and people, and between people and things. At issue are the political lives of imperial debris, and the uneven pace with which people can extricate themselves from the structures and signs by which remains take hold. Rubrics such as “colonial legacy” offer little help. They fail to capture the evasive space of imperial formations past and present as well as the perceptions and practices by which people are forced to reckon with features of those formations in which they remain vividly and imperceptibly bound. They also gloss over the creative, critical and sometimes costly measures people take to become less entangled.

Ruinous Processes in Imperial Formations

To look at “imperial formations” rather than at empire per se is to register the ongoing quality of processes of decimation, displacement, and reclamation. Imperial formations are relations of force. They harbor those mutant, rather than simply hybrid, political forms that endure beyond the formal exclusions that legislate against equal opportunity, commensurate dignities, and equal rights. Working with the concept of

imperial formation rather than empire per se, the emphasis shifts from fixed forms of sovereignty and its denials, to **gradated forms** of sovereignty and what has long marked the technologies of imperial rule -- sliding and contested scales of differential access and rights.¹⁶ Imperial formations are defined by racialized relations of allocations and appropriations. Unlike empires, they are processes of becoming, not fixed things. Not least, they are states of deferral that mete out promissory notes that are not exceptions to their operation but constitutive of them: imperial guardianship, trusteeships, delayed autonomy, temporary intervention, conditional tutelage, military takeover in the name of humanitarian works, violent intervention in the name of human rights and security measures in the name of peace.

Raymond Williams' notion of a "formation" calls attention to those "tendencies," with "variable and often oblique relations to formal institutions."¹⁷ Our interest too is in those oblique relations, in dissociated and dislocated histories of the present, in those sites and circumstances of dispossession that imperial architects disavow as not of their making, in violences of disenfranchisement that are shorn of their status as imperial entailments and that go by other names. As Edouard Glissant once noted, a population "whose domination by an Other is concealed...must search elsewhere for the principle of domination...because the system of domination...is not directly tangible."¹⁸ Our concern is with these opacities that imperial formations produce between the elusive vectors of accountability and the lasting tangibilities in which ruination operates -- and on which such formations thrive. A richer sense of the nature of "tangibility" is critical to this venture.

To Ruin: A Virulent Verb

In its common usage, “ruins” are privileged sites of reflection – of pensive rumination. Portrayed as enchanted, desolate spaces, large-scale monumental structures abandoned and grown over, ruins provide a favored image of a vanished past, what is beyond repair and in decay, thrown into aesthetic relief by nature’s tangled growth. Such sites come easily to mind: Cambodia’s Angkor Wat, the Acropolis, the Roman Coliseum, icons of a romantic loss and longing that inspired the melancholic prose of generations of European poets and historians who devotedly chronicled pilgrimages to them.¹⁹ Perhaps this is one reason why transnational institutions like UNESCO work so hard at their “preservation.” But in thinking about “ruins of empire,” this volume works explicitly against the melancholic gaze to reposition the present in the wider structures of vulnerability, damage, and refusal that imperial formations sustain. Nor is it the wistful gaze of imperial nostalgia to which we turn. Walter Benjamin provides the canonical text for thinking about ruins as “petrified life,” as traces that mark the fragility of power and the force of destruction. But we are as taken with ruins as sites that condense alternative senses of history, and with ruination as a ongoing corrosive process that weighs on the future. Unlike Benjamin, a focus on imperial debris seeks to mark the “trail of the psyche” -- a venture he rejected -- as much it seeks to follow his acute alertness to the “track of things.”²⁰

To ruin, according to the OED, **is to inflict or bring great and irretrievable disaster upon, to destroy agency, to reduce to a state of poverty, to demoralize completely.**²¹ Attention here is on “to ruin” as an active process and a vibrantly violent verb. In this forum, we turn with intention not to the immediate violence of Iraq and recognized zones of active war, but to the enduring quality of imperial remains, what they impinge upon and their uneven distribution of impaired states. This is not a turn to ruins as memorialized monumental “left overs” or relics – although these come into our purview as well-- but rather to what people are “**left with**”: to what remains blocking livelihoods and health, to the aftershocks of imperial assault, to the social afterlife of structures, sensibilities, and things. Such effects reside in the corroded hollows of landscapes, in the gutted infrastructures of segregated cityscapes and in the micro-ecologies of matter and mind. The focus then is not on inert remains but on their vital refiguration. The question is pointed: how do imperial formations persist in their material debris, in ruined landscapes and through the social ruination of people’s lives?²²

Imperial effects occupy multiple historical tenses. They are at once products of the past imperfect that selectively permeate the present as they shape both the conditional subjunctive and uncertain futures. Such effects are never done with, as Derek Walcott reminds us, in the definitely closed off *passé composé*. Frantz Fanon identified the extensive mental disorders that followed French rule in Algeria as the “tinge of decay” -- the indelible smack of degraded personhoods, occupied spaces, and limited possibilities-- that were (and remain) hardest to erase.²³ They are also the hardest to critically locate.

Fanon worked between two poles of decay: at one pole was an evocative

figurative sense that situated the breakdown of persons, their pathologies and mental disabilities as imperial effects. Here the future of such patients was already “mortgaged” by the “malignancy” of their psychological states. Subject to what Fanon called “a generalized homicide,” a whole generation of Algerians,” would be “the human legacy of France in Algeria.”²⁴ Aimé Césaire in 1955 called that affliction a “gangrene...distilled into the veins of Europe,” in the racialized rule of domestic France.²⁵

Such images could be construed mere metaphor but the ruinous “tinge of decay” for Fanon was never figurative alone. At the other pole lay the material, tangible and physical destruction of Algerian landscapes, drained swamps, charred homes and gutted infrastructures of over a century of French rule and nearly a decade of colonial war. To work between these is to acknowledge both the potential and the problems in sustaining a balance between the analytic power that “to ruin” carries as an evocative metaphor and the critical purchase it offers for grounding processes of actual decomposition, recomposition, and renewed neglect. These latter processes are of our time as they build on and reactivate the traces of another. Such remainders impinge on the allocation of space, resources and on what is available for material life. The analytic challenge is to work productively, if uneasily, with and across this tension. In so doing, our project here is not to fashion a genealogy of catastrophe or redemption. Making connections where they are hard to trace is not designed to settle scores nor as Wendy Brown warns to nurture undurable resentments and “wounded attachments.”²⁶ It is rather to recognize that these are unfinished histories, not of a victimized past but of **consequential histories of differential futures.**

“Ruin” is both the claim about the state of a thing and a process affecting it. It serves as both noun and verb. To turn to its verbal, active sense is to begin from a location that the noun, “ruin,” too easily freezes into stasis, into inert object, passive form. Imperial projects are themselves processes of ongoing ruination, processes that “bring ruin upon,” exerting material and social force in the present. By definition ruination is an ambiguous term; both an act of ruining, a condition of being ruined, and a cause of it. Ruination is an **act** perpetrated, a **condition** to which one is subject, and a **cause** of loss. These three senses may overlap in effect but they are not the same. Each has its own temporality. Each identifies different durations and moments of exposure to a range of violences and degradations that may be immediate or delayed, subcutaneous or visible, prolonged or instant, diffuse or direct.

By the OED again, ruination is a process that brings about “severe impairment, as of one’s health, fortune, honor, or hopes.” Conceptually, ruination may condense those impairments, or sunder them apart. To speak of colonial ruination is to trace the fragile and durable substance of signs, the visible and visceral senses in which the effects of empire are reactivated and remain. But ruination is more than a process that sloughs off debris as a by-product. It is also a **political project** that lays waste to certain peoples, relations and things that accumulate in specific places. To think with ruins of empire is to emphasize less the artifacts of empire as dead matter or remnants of a defunct regime than to attend to their re-appropriations, neglect, and strategic and active positioning within the politics of the present.

To focus on ruins is to broach the protracted quality of decimation in people’s

lives, to track the production of new exposures and enduring damage.²⁷ Elements of this concern have been the subject of critical geography, and environmental historians for some time.²⁸ Campaigns against what is now commonly referred to as “environmental racism” have been instrumental and effective in the public domain in documenting the grossly uneven distribution of pollution, waste disposal and biowaste among impoverished populations in the U.S. and worldwide.²⁹ Much of this critical work targets the long-term practices of multinationals, mining conglomerates, and successive U.S. administrations and Departments of Defense, Agriculture, and more recently Homeland Security that have laid to waste and continue to destroy micro-ecologies and the livelihoods of populations that live off and in them.³⁰ If critical geographers, environmental historians, and historically inclined anthropologists have taken the relationship between colonial rule and degraded environments as their subject, it is striking how little of this work has made its way back to the analytic center of postcolonial scholarship or is even considered in the archive of postcolonial situations.³¹ American studies scholar Valerie Kuletz has seen it apt to identify the abuse of the land of indigenous peoples in the U.S., Micronesia and Polynesia as “nuclear colonialism” and as acts of “social ruin”, a fact which people in those places, as she notes, recognized early on, but such work still rests on the margins of the conceptual reformulations in colonial studies itself.³²

If the multiple legacies of empire are what postcolonial scholarship has long imagined itself to arise from and account for, if not explain, one crucial task is to bring these fields of inquiry into more organic conversation. Disciplinary protocols of

presentation, venues of publication, and concepts that translate poorly can impede the task. The essays gathered here traverse a heteroclitite set of fields: imperialism is as much part of these accounts as imperial logics and colonial cultures. Cultural analysis is grounded in the political differentials through which the latter works. Here we envision colonial histories of the present that grapple with the psychological weight of remnants, the generative power of metaphor, and the materiality of debris to rethink the scope of damage and how people live with it.

We take it as a starting premise that what is most significantly left may not be blatantly evident, easy to document, or to see.³³ The concepts and notions conventionally used to make reference to colonial histories are symptomatic of the lack of clarity. Pervasive ones like “colonial legacy” and “colonial vestige” are deceptive terms that deflect analysis more than they clear the way. As Foucault charged, such “ready-made syntheses” are placeholders for processes that unite disparate forces under one term and gloss too easily over dispersed effects.³⁴ In the case of imperial formations, a “legacy” makes no distinctions between what holds and what lies dormant, between residue and recomposition, between what is a hold over and what is reinvested, between a weak and a tenacious trace. Such rubrics instill overconfidence in the knowledge that colonial histories matter -- far more than they animate an analytic vocabulary for deciphering *how* they do so. Such terms do little to account for the contemporary force of imperial remains, what people themselves count as colonial effects, and as importantly what they do about what they are left with.

With this in mind, a focus on “ruins of empire” is not about a gaze, but a critical

vantage point on one. Asking how people live **with** and **in** ruins redirects the engagement elsewhere, to the politics animated, to the common sense such habitations disturb, to the critiques condensed or disallowed, and to the social relations avidly coalesced or shattered around them. What material form do ruins of empire take when we turn to shattered peoples and polluted places rather than to the leisure of evocations? Situations of disparate time and place come into renewed view. Sequestered and displaced histories do as well. Imperial ruins, as treated here, are **racialized markers on a global scale**, the Agent Orange-infested landscapes of Vietnam, the hazardous wastes in former nuclear test sites of the Bikini Atolls, the continually battered, makeshift compounds of dispossessed and exiled Palestinians -- flooded with raw sewage from adjacent Israeli settlements-- in which they have to dwell³⁵ Imperial ruins may include the defunct sugar mills of Central Java as well as the decrepit barracks of India's railway communities where many Anglo-Indians still uneasily dwell while others refuse to recognize that these are feasible places to live?³⁶ These processes of ruination bear on material and social micro-ecologies in different ways. Under what conditions are those sites left to decompose, remanded, reconsigned, or disregarded? Some remains are ignored as innocuous leftovers, others petrify, some hold and spread their toxicities and become poisonous debris. Others are stubbornly inhabited by those displaced to make a political point, or requisitioned for a newly refurbished commodity-life for tourist consumption, or occupied by those left with nowhere else to turn.

What of those sites of decomposition that fall outside historical interest and preservation, places not honored as ruins of empire proper and go by other names? Some

remains are rejected as ruins all together. Much depends, as Derek Walcott again reminds us, on who is doing the labeling. As he noted in his 1992 Nobel lecture, the “*tristes tropiques*” that Claude Lévi-Strauss so lamented in elegy to “the already decrepit suburbs” of Lahore, may have been a pathos of empire felt more by nineteenth-century European transients -- anthropologists and the like – than those who actually dwelled there.³⁷ Walcott observes that “the sigh of History rises over ruins, not landscapes” but in the Antilles the only ruins were those of “sugar estates and abandoned forts” and there “the sigh of history dissolves.”

But the “sigh of history” can manifest in different registers. Nature rots quickly in the colonial tropics. In the Netherlands Indies, railways tracks for hauling rubber were rapidly overgrown, tobacco sheds made of plaited bamboo and wood were eaten through by termites, leaving no structural fragments of iron or stone. But lots more than a trace remains of how the land was used, and what connects colonial rubber production in Sumatra to Indonesia’s Reebok and Adidas factories, what land has been made available and converted for new kinds of export production and who profits from them. That colonial imprint is deep in Indonesia and elsewhere. Much depends on where we look for detritus, what we expect it to look like, and what we expect to see. That the “absence of ruins” in the Caribbean equals an absence of living history is not an assessment with which all agree. Richard Price instructs us to seek those traces elsewhere, in the “semi-parodic artworks” of the iconic Martiniquan figure of Médard, a man who in the 1950s and 1960s “made from the detritus of industrial society (cellophane from cigarette packages, silver paper from gum wrappers, bentwood from boxes of Camembert)”

objects that retold stories of colonial violence as he rewrote their plots.³⁸

Walcott too was impatient with the “consoling pity” of travelers who “carried with them the infection of their own malaise,” those consumed with sadness because they “misunderstood the light and the people on whom the light falls.”³⁹ Rejecting the pathos of ruins, he opted for a celebration of survival. But his vision was hardly romantic. It was full of rage. His descriptions of the sewers that spew into white sand beaches and “polluted marinas” call attention to ruined ecologies as the profit of some, and the ruination of others. “Proceed with caution,” Doris Sommer warns. Better to resist the “the rush of sentimental identification that lasts barely as long as the read” or the mournful regard.⁴⁰ Melancholy, compassion, and pity nourish imperial sensibilities of destruction and the redemptive satisfaction of chronicling loss. We are schooled to be alert to the fact that ruins hold histories, that ruins are the ground on which histories are contested and remade.⁴¹ Still, the nominative form of a “ruin” does less work than “to ruin” as an ongoing process. Ruins can represent both something more and less than the sum of the sensibilities of people who live in them. Instead we might turn to ruins as epicenters of renewed collective laments, as history in a spirited voice, as sites that animate both despair and new possibilities, bids for entitlement, and unexpected collaborative political projects.

Some kinds of imperial ruin are easier to identify than others. Projects of cultural salvage—whether of monuments, artifacts, customs and peoples— are available for scrutiny in the way others are not. There are resurrected ruins, like those studied by John Collins, part of the World Bank/UNESCO cultural heritage projects designed to “harvest

the economic value” and capitalize on the allure of partially restored people, things, and their ostensibly uniting essences. Yet such restorations disperse and redistribute people, making their ways of being vital to national development and productive of new inequalities.⁴² Then there are those ruins that stirred Jamaica Kincaid’s derisive and angry view of Antigua, marked with buildings whose faded placards note “repairs pending” for decades, while damaged but “splendid old buildings from colonial times” are well maintained in carefully tended disrepair.⁴³

Some imperial ruins can be distinguished by where they are located-- in metropole or colony -- or on faded imperial maps. Others cannot. Strewn throughout the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia are the enticements of enjoying “Ruins by Day, Luxury by Night,” as eager travelers “balance the indolence of a colonial-era luxury hotel with the more demanding task of exploring centuries-old Khmer ruins from dawn ‘til dusk.”⁴⁴ These are more than leisurely distractions for the history-minded, knowledge-seeking traveler. Edification here, like the Grand Tour of the European bourgeoisie in earlier centuries, not only distinguishes Culture from cultures. It replays the “salvage” rescue operation that European empires claimed as their expert knowledge and benevolent task. Napoleon took more archaeologists and “rubble seekers” with him to Egypt than surgeons and surveyors. Nineteenth-century colonials in the Netherlands Indies participated in Europe’s obsession with visiting Hindu ruins, accruing cultural capital on their days off.

Colonialisms have been predicated on guarding natural and cultural patrimonies for populations assumed to be needy of guidance in how to value and preserve them.⁴⁵ This sort of attention to ruins chronicles a present landscape and people already found

wanting. But this heart felt gaze on the ruin, so much a part of the contemporary analysis of the ruins of modernity, a gaze that echoed Diderot's sense that he felt "freer" in the presence of ruins, is not our interest here.⁴⁶ Rather than the introspective gaze of Europeans **on** ruins, we look to the lives of those living **in** them. That shift is key to trace the dried up veins of Anaconda's copper mines that joined Butte, Montana and Chuquicamata, Chile and wrecked privation on the lives and bodies of their sequestered laboring populations.⁴⁷

Imperial nostalgia plays through and sells sojourns among colonial ruins in other, predictable ways. There is the "find" of worthy voyagers, the "ruins of Popokvil atop Bokor Mountain in Cambodia... There, you'll find the remains of French colonial-era town-- a crumbling post office, an empty Catholic church..."⁴⁸ At the Mbweni Ruins Hotel in Zanzibar guests can sleep in what was once a school for "freed slave girls," the first Anglican Christian missionary settlement in East Africa, made into a domesticated "colony." Arranged in 1871 in clusters of small neat houses and garden plots, this was precisely the bucolic vision that imperial architects harbored to domesticate their recalcitrant, racially ambiguous and destitute populations throughout the colonial world.⁴⁹ Guests can learn the history of philanthropic imperial projects *and* can take solace in the multiple times that the buildings were abandoned and restored with the intervention of European good works, at the height of imperial expansion and after.⁵⁰ We are reminded of Renato Rosaldo's astute observation that imperialist nostalgia is not a postcolonial pleasure but a concerted colonial one, a mourning contingent and concomitant with what

colonialisms destroy.⁵¹ Such ruins might be read as vestige and remnant but they are neither history's refuse nor unclaimed.⁵²

Imperial ruins can also mark the contest for originary racialist claims. Zanzibar's tourists may be unknowing participants in the celebration of empire in the Mbweni Ruins Hotel, but often the political life of ruins are more explicit for all to contest and see. In Zimbabwe, it was from the sixty acres of stone ruins, "the Great Zimbabwe," that Cecil Rhodes pilfered his prized soapstone bird with which he adorned his Capetown house in 1889, the year before he established a Royal Charter for the British South Africa Company. The stone birds and the ruins that housed them were confiscated by Rhodes but it was successive states controlled by white settlers and later by African nationalists who each made the ruins their own. White racial supremacy and refusal of it, as Henrietta Kuklick so eloquently writes, were fought on the terrain of these ruins. "The Great Zimbabwe" was requisitioned as "proof" of racialized progenitors in the nineteenth century and re-emerged at the center of heated political contest a century later.⁵³ Clearly, these are not all imperial "ruins" of common vintage nor are their political entailments the same. What they might share is what the Afghanistani photographer and performance artist, Lida Abdul has called sites and structures "around which stories are wrapped to hide the sounds and images that roam" through them.⁵⁴

If imperial debris deposits in the disabled, racialized spaces of colonial histories past and present, it is gendered as well -- in how it is embodied, where it is lodged, and how it is expressed. In Sharad Chari's, John Collins', and Vyjayanthi Rao's essays, both women and men sustain these injuries, but it is women who voice the injuries to which

this debris gives rise. We see it in Collins' turn to the critical repartee of Topa, a woman whose body was as marked as her bearing and her history by her precarious poverty and the assumptions of those who would claim to alleviate it.⁵⁵ It is in the demand of Jane Clover for her own "piece of oxygen," a woman to whom Chari turns to describe the atmospheric pressure in which people live close to oil refineries of post-apartheid Durban, and it is in the songs of lament that women farmers chant in their displaced fields and about their submerged village in southern India, described by Rao.⁵⁶ Over and over again, it is women who seem to loudly attest. Gender may inflect how ruination is embodied and who bears the debris. Nancy Hunt's essay rivets on "the sound of twisted and anguished laughter collected, convulsed, and retracted around the forms of sexual violence that were basic to, indeed constitutive of, the reproductive ruination of the rubber regimes in Leopold's Congo."⁵⁷

Still, none of the above seize on gender distinctions to frame their arguments (though all are keenly attuned to the gender dispositions that mark recollection, as in Chari's attention to the photographs taken by and of groups of young men on the neighborhood lanes where "recently-dispossessed people made the new Coloured township their home."⁵⁸ Ariella Azoulay, who otherwise speaks so directly to how gender inequalities are 'lauded and glorified' in the history of the visual fields in which she has longed work, chooses here not to do so.⁵⁹ The sleeping figures of Israeli soldiers wrapped in colorful blankets in what we quickly learn is a Palestinian home are positions staked out by male soldiers. But Azoulay does not argue that such assertions are made by them alone. On the contrary, Israeli women and men stand together on a hilltop "to show

their children both the symmetry that justifies Israel's devastation of Gaza, and Israel's spectacular show of force."⁶⁰ Her point is mute but explicit: it is not that imperial debris does not accumulate with different gendered effects but this is not where she chooses to pull our attention. When she describes the applause at the sight of the smoking ruins of Palestinian homes, the exuberant shouts, "we've done it!" these are raised voices of both Israeli women and men. Hunt's treatment of the rapes committed under King Leopold's Congo is not immuned to what was done to young women in particular; she is direct in arguing that cannibalism and mutilation were able to enter Roger Casement's humanitarian narrative in ways that rape could not. Still, how gendered dispositions matter to living in imperial debris is less obvious. The acoustic registers of response are shared by women and men far more than the skewed photographic archives of bodily exposures.

IMPERIAL DEBRIS BY OTHER NAMES

Perhaps the most critical task is to address, if not answer, the question prompted by Walcott in "Ruins of a Great House": what is the rot that remains when the men are gone? What forms does rot take? What does it corrode, what interior spaces does it touch, and where is it that it remains? Walcott's language is poetic, but the dispersed ruination he looks to is not. There may be remnants that slip from immediate vision, detritus that is harder to grasp -- intimate injuries that appear as only faint traces, or deep deformations

and differentiations of social geography which go by other names. There are social dislocations whose etiologies are found in labels that lead away from empire and push analysis far from colonial histories, severing those connections; the terms substituted point to “urban decay,” to “the perils of progress,” to “environmental degradation,” “industrial pollution,” or “racialized unemployment” – to analyses of those places swept up by modernization and to those swept aside as the refuse of a capitalist market that has since moved on.

What work does it do to identify these as ruins of empire? What insights does it offer to recast these generic labels and processes as patterned imperial effects that produce subjects with more limited possibilities and who are hampered differently by those effects? One argument might be that such a critical move makes connections that are not otherwise readily visible. Such renaming relocates processes dislodged from their specific histories, disjointed from the connections that made some people and places susceptible to ruin or abandonment. These are not ruins of empire in any figurative sense. Sharad Chari’s work with those who live on the toxic edges of oil refineries and in the remains of apartheid in Durban, South Africa makes this clear.⁶¹ These are zones of vulnerability which the living inhabit and to which we should attend.

Greg Grandin’s riveting account of Fordlandia, Henry Ford’s vision of a bucolic American settlement and way of life in the Amazonian jungle at the turn of the twentieth century does more than remind us that Ford’s success was contingent on the production of rubber in colonial possessions through Southeast Asia.⁶² He underscores that “Detroit not only supplied a continual stream of symbols of America’s cultural power but offered

the organizational know-how necessary to run a vast industrial enterprise like a car company – or an empire.”⁶³ Treating Detroit as an imperial nexus imbricated in and dependent upon colonial labor regimes throughout the world rejects the American “exception,” changes the fulcrum of Detroit’s demise. By placing it in the balance of a broader sweep of imperial debris, Detroit is repositioned, not on the outer fringes of “the rust belt” but as one of the corrosive centers of one disabled form of U.S. empire.⁶⁴ The current caché of what some critics call “ruin porn” with respect to the guided tours of Detroit’s “splendid ruins” pushes those connections even further away.⁶⁵

One impulse in addressing the admittedly broad sense of imperial ruin embraced here might be to distinguish between those processes played out in imperial centers versus those situations and sites that appear in formerly colonized regions. But there is perhaps more to gain by suspending that impulse and not making such distinctions too readily. The “interior” and “exterior” spaces of imperial formations may not correspond to the common geographical designations that imperial architects scripted themselves. Terms like “metropole” and “colony,” “core” and “periphery” presume to make clear what is not. We might rather think of other criteria to distinguish the contemporary zones of imperial duress that are more mutable and as mutable as imperial formations themselves: the breadth of corridors in which people can move, the virtual barriers by which they are cordoned off, the kinds of infrastructure to which they have access, the selective dumping of waste, the pre-emptive racialized exclusions and exemptions in which they live.

In a recent article for an American audience, Israeli novelist David Grossman

describes the apathy and studied indifference that ongoing political, military and religious conflict imposes on those living in Israel, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in war-torn places of the world. The image he conjures is of people whose moral compasses are narrowed, whose feelings are numbed, whose language is rendered shallower, thinned by the onslaught on their everyday. As he puts it, there is a **“shrinking of the ‘surface area’ of the soul** that comes in contact with the bloody and menacing world out there.” Destruction for Grossman is inside people and out – coating their micro- and material environments.⁶⁶ The resonance -- and sharp contrast-- with Walcott’s “rot that remains” and Fanon’s “tinge of decay” is striking. In the non-immediate, extended conditions of the latter, numbness can give way to critique, language can become sharpened and thickened – rather than thinned-- with double-entendres that mock the security measures that terrorize and destroy rather than protect.

Stories congeal around imperial debris as do critiques. So does disqualified knowledge and subjugated genealogies decoupled from the processes of which they were a part. The overgrown ruins of the palace of Sans Souci in Haiti’s northern mountains, that Michel Rolph Trouillot has so powerfully described (built by its first black king after the defeat of the French in 1804) harbors a suspended, (dis)quieted history of the Haitian Revolution and the differential histories of colonial relations wedged between mortar and crumbling stone.⁶⁷ Michelle Cliff frames her novel of Jamaica, *No Telephone To Heaven*, around the Jamaica term “ruinate” that as a noun subsumes within it “to ruin” as a verb. She describes it as at once cultivated land that has been left to lapse into overgrown vegetation. “Ruinate” in its use, is steeped in colonial history and marks its durability but

seems to be as mobile as the people who attempt to escape it, as they move to and return from the New York City boroughs of the Bronx and Queens. It carries both the palpable colonial history of abandoned European plantations, living waste, and as yet unreclaimed futures.⁶⁸

Ruins, as Kuklick found in Zimbabwe can take on a political life of their own. As Nadia Abu El Haj writes, in Jerusalem “partly destroyed buildings were partially restored and reconstructed *as ruins* in order to memorialize more recent histories of destruction, and older stones were integrated into modern architectural forms in order to embody temporal depth.”⁶⁹ Her point is now commonly shared: ruins are not just found, they are **made**. They become repositories of public knowledge and new concentrations of public declaration.

We need little more evidence that the public or state recognition of something as a ruin as well as the claims made for it is in itself a political act. Such recognized ruins are politicized, but the most enduring ruins in Israel are neither recognized as ruins nor as ruination wrought by colonial policies. These ruins are not acknowledged to be there at all. These are the literal ruins of Palestinian villages razed, bulldozed, and buried by the Israeli military and a state- endorsed Israeli Afforestation Project. This intensive planting campaign (for which Hebrew school children in Europe and the U.S. have been avidly encouraged to contribute their pennies “to plant a tree for Israel”) has literally obliterated the very presence of Palestinian villages and farmsteads on Jerusalem’s periphery for over fifty years.⁷⁰ If planting is a key technology in Israeli politics, here ruination has a perverse, protracted and violent colonial history. “Security groves” have replaced

Palestinian olive orchards with cypress and pines, recreational parks dense with eucalyptus trees smooth over Palestinian cemeteries. Not least, remains of Arab villages have been effaced -- as are the claims of their former inhabitants that these were never “abandoned” fields but ones they owned, lived off, and long cultivated.

In Bethlehem’s Aida Refugee Camp such fields “abandoned” to Israeli occupation are called by other names: there, children are armed at the Lajee Children’s Center with computers and cameras, taught how to collect the stories of their grandparents whose land was seized, to locate the trees they harvested, to smell the herbs their grandparents remember, to scavenge the hilltops where their houses were destroyed to make way for Israeli settlements. Sometimes there are no ruins at all: Asked by their elders to collect thyme and sage from the fields, their grandchildren often brought back stones and soil instead.⁷¹ Some found old olive trees among the new pines. In Beit Jibreen, twelve-year-old Suhaib photographed the ruins of an old house on the hill, imagining that it might have been his grandmother’s.⁷²

Ruins are made but not just by anyone, anytime, anywhere. Large-scale ruin-making takes resources and planning that may involve forced removal of populations and new zones of uninhabitable space, reassigning inhabitable space and dictating how people are supposed to live in them. As such, these ruin-making endeavors are typically state projects, ones that are often strategic, nation-building, and politically charged.⁷³ The fabrication of nuclear ruins, for instance, was critical in the construction of Cold War national defense policies and in shaping a U.S. public prompted to be fascinated and traumatized by the specter of nuclear war.⁷⁴ Nuclear ruins remain central to the political

imaginary of the U.S. security state today. Joe Masco argues that Cold War planners saw their task to be one of molding and emotionally managing an American public. They did so with simulated bomb-threats and theatrical evacuations in cities and towns across the country. Strategic public operations imagined ruins, televised ruins, and simulated ruins, all with attention to particular domestic objects, pointedly anticipating the decimation of what touched Americans most closely, the hard-won household technology and material comforts of post-war quotidian life.

Ruins draw on residual pasts to make claims on futures. But they can also create a sense of irretrievability or of futures lost. The Ochagavia hospital in Santiago's suburbs, built as a "spectacular showcase" to Pinochet's vision of Chile's modernity and progressivism, showcases something else: with what Jon Beasley describes as "the beached whale of a monument whose presence has been repressed and ignored," the half-built hospital re-collects what could have been rather than what was.⁷⁵ How such modernist ruins differ from imperial ones would be suggested not only by the different histories they unsettle and differently call upon, but also by the specific people dispossessed, or otherwise laid to waste by them.

This sense of arrested rather than possible futures and the ruins they produce, is one way to convey the problematic processes of development policies. As Vyjayanthi Rao shows in her essay here, the building of the Srisaïlam mega-dam in southern India that began in 1981 and displaced more than one hundred and fifty thousand people and submerged over one hundred villages makes real a failed future and the forceful presence of imperial debris in visceral ways. During the dry season every year, these submerged

villages reappear to haunt those who once lived there and then disappear, as both sign and substance for those who once lived there of their precarious futures and of national development's unfulfilled promise. The village ruins contrast the archaeological salvage project of valued Hindu temples enacted in the same space. Here the critique of development is laid bare in a landscape scarred with ruined villages, laid to waste alongside the transplanted temple ruins, preened for historical tourism and preserved as part of India's national heritage.⁷⁶

Looking to imperial ruins not necessarily as monuments but as ecologies of remains opens to wider social topographies. The ruins of Native American burial sites mark only one site in a broader contested ground of new land claims and entitlements.⁷⁷ But we might also think of what I elsewhere call, "the carceral archipelago of empire" that has distributed convict islands, detention centers, pauper and children's and penal colonies throughout the globe -- gradated zones of containment that mixed and matched "security" and defense with confinement, abuse, "education," and abandonment.⁷⁸ Such infrastructures of large and small scale bear what captivated Walter Benjamin, the "marks and wounds of the history of human violence."⁷⁹ It is these spatially assigned "traces of violence," more than the "deadening of affects" to which we turn.⁸⁰

Focusing on the materiality of debris, we seek to stay in the "logic of the concrete" as Nancy Hunt urges in *Colonial Lexicon* when she redirects us back to Levi-Strauss's term.⁸¹ Ruins can be marginalized structures that continue to inform social modes of organization but that cease to function in ways they once did. What happens at the threshold of transformation when unfinished development projects are put to other

use, when test sites are grown over, when Soviet military camps are abandoned and remade as in the Ukrainian-Polish borderlands?⁸² What happens when island enclaves, no longer a declared nuclear zone, as in the Bikini Atoll, become repositories of vulnerabilities that are likely to last longer than the political structures that produced them? Each of these points not to ruins set off from people's lives but what it might mean to live through, with, and as *bricoleurs* around them.

In thinking about imperial debris and ruin one is struck by how intuitively evocative and elusive such effects are, how easy it is to slip between metaphor and material object, between infrastructure and imagery, between remnants of matter and mind. The point of critical analysis is not to look “underneath” or “beyond” that slippage but to understand the work that slippage does and the political traffic it harbors. Reading W.G. Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction*, a meditation on Germany during and just after World War II, the numbness of living in the still smoldering ruins, the sheer mass of debris, the (deceptive) “silence above the ruins” both contrasts and converges with the sorts of remains we write of here – in and out of focus, in and out of speakable bounds.⁸³

While sites of colonial occupation are not outside our purview, our collective focus is more on what Rob Nixon calls the “slow violence” and “long dyings” that mark zones of abandonment.⁸⁴ If Giorgio Agamben developed the concept of social abandonment, it is Joao Biehl's extraordinary ethnography, *Vita: Life in Zone of Social Abandonment* where it is given flesh. For Biehl, that zone produces persons who become “a human ruin,” “leftover” in their unexceptional, patterned subjection “to the typically uncertain

and dangerous mental health treatment reserved for the urban working poor” in Brazil.⁸⁵ The social abandonments under scrutiny in these pages are ruinations of a different sort: sites of risk proportioned by imperial effects. We track the “concrete trajectory” of colonial exclusions and derailments that carve out the structures of privilege, profit, and destruction today. Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine* could help lead back in that direction. There are no index entries for “empire” or “imperialism” in her scathing account of what she calls “the disaster capitalism complex,” but the psychic and material connections are threaded through every chapter -- from the current \$200 billion “homeland security industry” back to U.S. support for military governments that eviscerated the subsistence of peoples in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Brazil.⁸⁶

This is not to suggest that complex histories of capitalism and empire should all be folded into an imperial genealogy. It is, however, to attend to the **evasive** history of empire that disappears so easily into other appellations and other, more available, contemporary terms. It is to recognize that the “bio” in biopolitical degradations is not haphazardly joined with histories of empire. The social terrain on which colonial processes of ruination leave their material and mental marks are patterned by the social kinds those political systems produced, by the racial ontologies they called into being, and by the cumulative historical deficiencies certain populations are seen to embody -- and the ongoing threats to the body politic associated with them. Exclusion as in the case of Palestinians is posited as the defense of society against its internal enemies, partition and arbitrary violence the results. As David Lloyd argues for the history of British state policies in Northern Ireland, “partition, which is the foundation of the state,

is also its ruination.”⁸⁷

Zygmunt Bauman identifies the production of waste and “wasted lives” as the required, intended and inevitable debris of the modern.⁸⁸ Bauman may be partially right but such a frame can only account for the fact of accumulated leftovers, of superfluous, obsolete, and bypassed people and things. **It cannot, however, account for their densities and distribution.** Modernity and capitalism can account only partly for the left aside, but not where people are left, what they are left with, and what means they have to deal with what remains. Globalization may account for the dumping of toxic waste on the Ivory Coast but not the trajectory of its movement and the history that made west Africa a suitable and available site. Capitalism can account for the oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico by BP in 2010 and Texaco and later Chevron’s three decades of toxic contamination and decimation of the livelihoods of rainforest inhabitants of the Amazon, but not the worldwide coverage of, and outrage over, the former and the sparse note of the latter.⁸⁹ Again, there are ruins of empire that are called “ruins” as well as those that are not. The political economy of nuclear testing can account for the proliferation of waste dumps, but not the campaign in 1996 to locate the Ward Valley nuclear waste dump in the heart of the Mojave Desert National Preserve and on land that Native American nations held sacred.⁹⁰ After thirty years of uranium mining carried out during the late 1940s through 1960s across Navajo lands in Arizona and New Mexico, native populations still refer to their late onset cancers as a “legacy of tears.”⁹¹ The social and physical effects of uranium mining on Aboriginal populations in Australia for the last three decades is a colonial story -- of state commissions mounted and ignored, of “spillages and silences,”

of cancer rates among Aboriginal populations near these sites massively increasing, of regard and dis-regard -- of its own.⁹² At issue is whether recognition produces more effective histories, what Fernando Coronil calls “relational histories,” that “connect fragments to wholes” of the imperial present.⁹³ Rethinking imperial formations as polities of dislocation and deferral which cut through the nation-state by delimiting interior frontiers as well as exterior ones, is one step in reordering our attention.⁹⁴

Race and Imperial Debris

Might we turn back to James Agee’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* not to mark the universal dignity and damages that dire poverty bestows, but as specific places and specific sorts of people abandoned by specific state policies and historical acts, as the embodied ruins of a racialized American empire?⁹⁵ And why does it seem so counter-intuitive and forced to do so?

Kathleen Stewart makes it seem less so in her ethnography of those people who live among the detritus of West Virginia’s coal mining industry today. She excavates “the ruined and trashed” economy of the American south whose historical veins are coursed through with U.S. Coal and Oil Company land buy-outs at the turn of the century, with hills that “became a wasteland of the unemployed” during the 1930s depression, and with “over 100,000 dead in the mines since 1906.”⁹⁶ She might tell that story, as she insists, in the conditional tense, but says she will not reproduce a seamless narrative. Instead she takes the “trash that collects around people’s places, like the ruins

that collect in the hills” to track the composition and decomposition of people’s lives, their movement between decay, melancholy and agentive engagement.⁹⁷ As she writes, “things do not simply fall into ruin or dissipate...[they] fashion themselves into powerful effects that remember things in such a way that ‘history’ digs itself into the present and people can’t [sic] help but recall it.”⁹⁸

Agee’s story might be rewritten in a similar vein, not as the iconic story of the dignity that emerges from the indignities of being poor white in the rural south, nor only as a national, domestic racial story of industrializing America. One could imagine a reframing of this form of ruination as one moment in a broader history of U.S. empire, a history that would track cotton production and the creation of expert knowledge of eugenics that authorized institutionalized neglect both of newly freed blacks and “poor whites.” These are not untold stories. They have been told as racialized histories, but not as racialized histories of U.S. empire.

Moving between ruins and ruination, between material objects and processes is sometimes easier said than done. Sometimes the ruins are claimed to retain ghosts in vivid form: some such phantoms haunt central Java’s sugar factories, described by John Pemberton as “forces moving on their own, operating by uncertain contracts and demanding untoward sacrificial exchange.”⁹⁹ But in fact, in much of the colonial tropics, one is struck by the absence of colonial ruins, as in vast tracts of Vietnam once overrun by a multinational plantation industry. In some places, as Walcott claims, there is hardly a trace of a colonial ruin at all. There are not petrified dwellings as in Dresden partially burned to the ground, not open sewers clogging the senses, not a rampage of rats

claiming new quarters, not the zoos Sebald so horrifically described full of mangled animals, no debris of watches that stopped ticking, no dolls with severed heads. Here we are not talking about an event of bombardment and the fast-acting decomposition that follows. The ruins of empire may have none of that sort of immediacy.

But they can be as close at hand with an immediacy of another kind. “The coolie,” a fragment of Val Daniel’s poem on Sri Lanka’s tortured colonial history, provides a counter-point to the master’s ruinous tale.¹⁰⁰ As he writes:

*...The sole witness
to blood shed? The land, of course, with its wounds unfurled:
gouged here, leveled there, with rivers dry-bedded
run, flooding pits, filling dams, in this redeemed world*

Colonialism may have been “*like a rash spread on the skin of the landscape for cash.*” But ruination can incite vibrant refusal to accept its terms and recast the story. As Nancy Hunt argues, hunting down the rusted guns in the Congo is really not the point of getting at the remains of the violence of rubber extraction under King Leopold -- nor is it really what is left.¹⁰¹

But sometimes, as in Vietnam today, live ammunition **is** the political point. These are not “ruins” per se, though of the over eight million tons of bombs dropped in Vietnam thirty years ago, there remain over three hundred thousand tons of unexploded ordnance (UXO’s) that includes what the Vietnamese government estimates are 800,000 cluster

bombs, M79 grenade bombs, and flechette bombs still in the soil.¹⁰² Limbs and lives are still being lost. Agent Orange, the military colloquialism for the twenty million gallons of deadly herbicides sprayed across Vietnam for ten years between 1961-1971 by U.S. forces also has potent presence still. Its purpose was described as twofold: to lay bare the jungles and the cover under which Vietcong soldiers could potentially hide, and to destroy their food supplies. It defoliated more than five million acres of land.¹⁰³ Five hundred thousand acres of crops were destroyed. Toxic residues remain in soils, riverbeds, and the food chain. But the witnesses were also bodies themselves. Ten diseases are presently linked to exposure at the lethal levels used in Vietnam: these include cancers, respiratory disorders, severe mental retardation and muscular-skeletal, organic, and developmental birth defects.¹⁰⁴

There is nothing “over” about this form of ruination: it remains in bodies, in the poisoned soil, in water on a massive and enduring scale. In 1984 Vietnam Veterans filed a class-action law suit against Dow Chemicals, Monsanto and five other companies. They were accorded an out of court settlement of \$180 million. No compensation has been ever made to Vietnamese civilians.¹⁰⁵ Their appeals over the last decade have been repeatedly dismissed on the grounds that although dioxin is a poison, it was never intended to be used on humans and therefore neither constitutes a “chemical” weapon nor a violation of international law. This particular “imperial debris” rests in the deformed bodies of children whose grandparents were exposed. New development projects come with new risks: as new land is being cultivated, bombs buried for decades, are now exploding.¹⁰⁶ But bed and table legs are also being made of the steel from recycled unexploded bombs.

As journalists Glantz and Nguyen note, industrialists are not worried about their supplies running out.

“GROANING AMONG THE SHADOWS” – OR RESENTMENT IN THEM

In 1964 Derek Walcott wrote, “decadence begins when a civilization falls in love with its ruins.”¹⁰⁷ By Walcott’s account, England is doomed, as are those transposed ex-colonial subjects like V.S. Naipaul who pined for the grandeur of empire (as much, or more, than some British nostalgics themselves.) Some ruins are loved more than others. One set of “nobly built but crumbling spaces” in the English “cult of ruin” enjoy particular and current favor. Ian Baucom refers to these as part of “country-house England”.¹⁰⁸

...this ordered and disciplinary England that at once is financed by the economics of empire and marks, in dazzling expanses of Italian marble and filigreed iron, the dominion of the metropolis over domestic and colonial countrysides – for which a current generation of English nostalgics yearn.¹⁰⁹

Nostalgia is often about that which one has never known or ever seen. It also carries a sense that one is already always too late. As Naipaul lamented in the *Enigma of Arrival*, “I had come to England at the wrong time...I had come too late to find the England, the heart of empire, which (like a provincial, from a far corner of the empire) I had created in

my fantasy.”¹¹⁰ Lévi-Strauss shared the same sense of “missing out,” of belatedness in his first ethnographic travels. Disappointed by the “already decrepit suburbia” of Lahore,¹¹¹ annoyed by the

huge avenues sketched out among the ruins (due, these, to the riots of the recent years) of houses five hundred years old....when was the right moment to see India? At what period would the study of the Brazilian savage have yielded the purest satisfaction, the savage himself been at his peak?...Either I am a traveler of ancient times...or I am a traveler of our own day...In either case I am the loser...for today, as I go groaning among the shadows, I miss, inevitably, the spectacle that is now taking shape...what I see is an affliction to me; and what I do not see, a reproach.

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Lévi-Strauss cringes with self-mockery at his disdain for the now. Naipaul doesn't bother. If both are only too aware that they have been duped by an imaginary of the ruin, they still crave the Real. Naipaul wants more than the ruins of empire. Like Lévi-Strauss his nostalgia is for what he can never know and has never seen. For the latter, it is a primitive in his prime, for the former, the evidence that empire was in opulent and working order. Both desire a state before the fall. Ian Baucom pinpoints when “things went wrong” for Naipaul -- just when his England was sullied by large-scale migration of ex-colonial subjects.¹¹³ But maybe things went really wrong when those subjects more

loudly refused colonialism's terms of privilege, voided the imperial contract, and had no regard for Naipaul's ruins at all.

Imperial ruins, as we locate them here, are less sites of love and lament for the bygone than implacable resentment, disregard, and abandonment. Faisal Devji aptly refers to them as the "scene of a crime," but also as an ungraspable moment, a vanishing point that can never come into clear view.¹¹⁴ As documents to damage, they can never be used to condemn the colonial alone. Nor should this be the point.¹¹⁵ To call the low-income high rises that hover on the periphery of Paris, where most of the riots took place in fall 2005, "ruins of French empire" is a metaphoric, political, and material claim. It makes pointed *material and affective* connections that public commentators have only made as a generic indictment of a colonial history that is now of the past. It reconnects the timing of their construction (beginning in 1950), with the material cement blocks that were used, with the former colonial North African people housed in them (that replaced the segregated shanty towns of immigrants working for Peugeot), with the political and economic barriers erected to keep them in place.¹¹⁶ It connects state racism with its colonial coordinates and with the forty percent unemployment of those who live on the outskirts of France's political and economic life and in barrack-like tenements.

The geographies of the revolts are colonial through and through.¹¹⁷ More importantly, understanding these sites as the ruins of empire registers the claims that young people in Clichy-Sous-Bois and elsewhere in France are making when they proclaim themselves "*indigènes de la république*" and to demand, as Hannah Arendt so succinctly put it, "the right to have rights." As reported in the press, Clichy-Sous-Bois

has no local police station, no movie theater, no swimming pool, no unemployment office, no child welfare agency, no subway or interurban train into the city. Cordoned off and excised from the polity, they are making claims that refuse those conditions and terms. As Fanon predicted, French rule would not only wrecked havoc on the futures of the colonized. Those relations would “haunt French believers in democracy.”¹¹⁸ And it does. It took fifty years for the French government to officially acknowledge the use of the term “Algerian war” -- the same amount of time it took some French scholars to acknowledge that the French Republic was from its start a racialized colonial one.¹¹⁹

Sebald remarks that Jean Amery saw resentment as essential to a critical view of the past. As Amery put it, “resentment nails every one of us onto the cross of this ruined past. Absurdly, it demands that the irreversible be turned around, that the event be undone.”¹²⁰ I would disagree. Resentment is an active, critical force in the present. It does not demand that “the event be undone.” It is about the possibility of naming injuries for what they are, a demand but that the conditions of constraint and injury be reckoned with and acknowledged. The state of emergency that the French state imposed across over a quarter of its national territory during the 2005 riots was in part a response to the riots but also to decades of a systematic project to disregard and destroy the agency, health, and livelihood of a very particular population. This form of ruination defines both a process and sustained political project on which imperial states did and continue to deeply depend. It does not produce passive or docile subjects but political and affective states of sustained resentment that redirect what will be in ruins and who will be living in them.

For students of colonial studies, it should sound an alarm. The point would not be, as some French scholars have recently done, to mount a charge that every injustice of the contemporary world has imperial roots, but rather to delineate the specific ways in which peoples and places are laid to waste, around whose lives it accumulates, where debris falls, and what constitutes “the rot that remains.” One task of a renewed colonial studies would be to sharpen our senses and sense of how to track the tangibilities of empire as effective histories of the present. This would not be to settle scores of the past, to dredge up what is long gone, but to refocus a finer historical lens on distinctions between what is residual and tenacious, what is dominant but hard to see, and not least what is emergent in today’s imperial formations -- and critically resurgent in responses to them. At least one challenge is not to imagine either “the postcolony” or the postcolonial imperium as replicas of earlier degradations or as the inadvertent, inactive leftovers of more violent colonial relations. It is rather to track how new de-formations and new forms of debris work on matter and mind to eat through people’s resources and resiliencies as they embolden new political actors with indignant refusal, forging unanticipated, entangled and empowered alliances.

INTRODUCTION NOTES

¹ Walcott, *Collected Poems 1948-1984*, 20.

² Ismond, *Abandoning Dead Metaphors*, 40. As the book title implies, Ismond takes Walcott's use of metaphor to be at the center of his political, anticolonial project, with metaphor as a "major term of reference," 2-3. This relationship between metaphor in language and metamorphosis of life runs throughout commentaries on Walcott's corpus.

³ Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, written in six volumes between 1776 and 1788 was among the earliest and well-regarded of this genre. For recent analogies see Murphy, *Are We Rome?* and Isaacson, "The Empire in the Mirror," a scathing review of Murphy's "simplistic historical analogies" in *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* May 13, 2007, at

www.nytimes.com/3007/05/13/books/review/Isaacson-t.html, accessed 7/1/2010;

Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*. Also see Chalmers Johnson's biting critique of contemporary U.S. foreign policy analysts who call on parallels with the Roman empire in *The Sorrows of Empire*.

⁴ Among those, see Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire*; Eagleton, *Holy Terror*; Kahn, *Sacred Violence*; Le Cour Grandmaison, *La République Impériale*; Lazreg, *Twilight of Empire*; McCoy, *Policing America's Empire*; McCoy, *Empires of Intelligence*.

⁵ Calhoun, Cooper, and Moore, *Lessons of Empire*.

⁶ See, for example, Feldman, *Governing Gaza*; McGranahan, *Arrested Histories*; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*; Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*; Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*.

⁷ See Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, one effort to address how colonial logics, imaginaries and violences are reworked and mutate in Africa's postcolonial present.

⁸ See Peluso and Watts, *Violent Environments*.

⁹ Miller, "Introduction," 5.

¹⁰ See, for example, Dirlik, "Historical Colonialism in Contemporary Perspective," 611, who argues that "it is not longer very plausible to offer colonialism as an explanation of [the] condition" in which the "vast majority of the populations of formerly colonized society live in conditions of despair...."

¹¹ Lazarus, "Postcolonial Studies after the Invasion of Iraq," 16.

¹² In France, this debate has taken on a polemical and sometimes vicious tone, detracting from the possibility of a productive and generative debate. See, for example, Bruckner, *La Tyrannie de la Penitence*; Lefeuvre, *Pour en Finir avec la Repentance Coloniale*; Bayart, *Les Études Postcoloniales*, and most recently the latter's response to his critics in "Les Très Faché(e)s des Études Postcoloniales." Also see Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia," 121-156.

¹³ See Stoler, "Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," 125-146; and Stoler, "Refractions off Empire," 93-107.

¹⁴ Eagleton, *After Theory*, 7.

¹⁵ Cooper, "Decolonizing Situations," 47-76.

¹⁶ For a fuller discussion of this issue see Stoler, "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," and Stoler and McGranahan, "Reassessing Imperial Terrain," 3-42.

¹⁷ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 117.

¹⁸ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 20.

¹⁹ For one good example of the continuing pleasures yielded by this laconic mood, see Woodward, *In Ruins*.

²⁰ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 212.

²¹ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1964: 1095.

²² For an unusually powerful treatment of the sorts of debris that imperial formations cultivate and disavow, see Charles McDonald's discussion of the landscape of natural disaster in the "unincorporated territory" of the U.S. Virgin Islands, where he argues for understanding debris as more than what is ruined or left behind: "Debris does not materialize out of thin air; it must already be present. It is not a kind of thing, but rather a state of being into which—and less commonly—out of which things may pass. Therefore, we are better served by tracking those moments of conversion when the unremarkable becomes impossible to ignore than by seeking new emergences or recent undoings."

(McDonald, "The Eye of the Storm")

²³ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 249. The full quote, opening the chapter on "Colonial War and Mental Disorder," reads:

That imperialism which today is fighting against a true liberation of mankind leaves in its wake here and there tinctures of decay which we must search out and mercilessly expel from our land and our spirits.

²⁴ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 251-252.

²⁵ Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 35-36.

²⁶ Brown, *Wounded Attachments*.

²⁷ Not all ruins located in empire are imperial ones. See, for example Lambek, *The Weight of the Past* for a nuanced study of Malagasy relics.

²⁸ For foundational works that do this work on different spatial and temporal scales see Watts, *Silent Violence*; Cosby, *Ecological Imperialism*; Grove, *Green Imperialism*; Peluso and Watts, *Violent Environments*, that focuses pointedly on how environment degradation has been made into a political issue, posed as a threat to national security. On state violence, nature preservation, and forced relocation in Tanzania see Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness*.

²⁹ See, for example, Kosek, *Understories*; Carruthers, *Environmental Justice in Latin America*; Grinde and Johansen, *Ecocide of Native America*; Brook, “Environmental Genocide,” 105-113; Hooks and Smith, “The Treadmill of Destruction,” 558-575, who argue that capitalism alone does not explain the distribution of toxic waste on Native American reservations. Also see McGovern, *The Capo Indian Landfill War*. On biowaste see, in particular, Hodges, “Chennai’s Biotrash Chronicles.”

³⁰ See, for example, McCaffrey, “The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Vieques, Puerto Rico,” 263-286; and Simon, Bouville, Land, and Beck, “Radiation Doses and Cancer Risks in the Marshall Islands Associated with Exposure to Radioactive Fallout from Bikini and Enewetak Nuclear Weapons Tests: Summary,” 159-162.

³¹ See, for example, Showers, *Imperial Gullies* and Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire* that seeks to “compare the impact of different commodity frontiers on colonized people,” vi. A strong tradition of such work has developed for Madagascar; see for

example, Jarosz, "Defining and Explaining Tropical Deforestation," 366-379; Kull, *Isle of Fire*; and Sodikoff, "Forced and Forest Labor in Colonial Madagascar," 407-435.

³² See Kuletz, *The Tainted Desert* and Kuletz, "Cold War Nuclear and Militarized Landscapes," 237-260. Also see Vine, *Island of Shame*.

³³ In this, we appreciate and share the dilemma of the ambitious volume *Postcolonial Disorders* edited by Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, Sandra Teresa Hyde, Sarah Pinto, and Bryon Good, whose contributors skillfully and with subtlety tack between the unspoken and the everyday, between the unspeakable and the hidden, and place both the political and the psychological at the center of what constitutes "postcolonial disorders."

³⁴ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 22.

³⁵ Frykberg, "Human Rights: Villages Contaminated by Settlement Sewage," *The Electronic Intifada*, 29 April 2010, [www/:electronicintifada.net/v2printer11237shtml](http://www.electronicintifada.net/v2printer11237shtml), accessed 6/1/10.

³⁶ On the Indian railway communities see Bear, "Ruins and Ghosts," 257-84.

³⁷ Walcott, "The Antilles."

³⁸ Price, *The Convict and The Colonel*.

³⁹ Walcott, "The Antilles."

⁴⁰ Sommer, *Proceed with Caution*, 15.

⁴¹ El Haj, *Facts on the Ground* lucidly makes this point as do Ginsburg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins*, and many of the contributions to Lazzara and Unruh, *Telling Ruins in Latin America*.

⁴² See John Collins' contribution to this volume and Collins, *The Revolt of the Saints*.

⁴³ Kincaid, *A Small Place*, 9.

⁴⁴ Landler, "Ruins by Day, Luxury by Night," *New York Times*, November 26, 2000, 10.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Beinart and Hughes's discussion of "colonial conservatism" and national parks in *Environment and Empire*.

⁴⁶ See Hell and Schonle, *Ruins of Modernity* for a pointed critique of the "imperial ruin gazer" and the new ruins which have become part of it.

⁴⁷ On these industrial ruins of U.S. empire see Finn, *Tracing the Veins*.

⁴⁸ "The Follow Your Bliss List," *New York Magazine* 2005 at <http://nymag.co/nymetro/travel/features/winter/2005/14792/index5.html>, accessed 4/9/07.

But also see Seth Meixner, "Cambodia: Ghosts and Grandeur" at <http://travel.iafrica.com/destin/asia/655247.htm>, accessed 4/9/07.

⁴⁹ On the scale and scope of this imperial imagery, namely, the depoliticized small-scale farmer ensconced in his self-contained space, see Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*.

⁵⁰ See <http://www.mbweni.com/bweniruins.htm> and numerous other sites with visitor comments. Also see Bruner, *Culture on Tour*, one of many studies that refers to African-American heritage tourists' visits to the dungeons from which slaves were sent from West Africa to the Americas.

⁵¹ Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," 68-87.

⁵² In *Industrial Ruins*, Tom Edensor conceives of exploring a ruin as a "kind of anti-tourism" because "movement is rough, disrupted and potentially perilous, replete with sensations other than the distanced gaze," 95. But this is precisely the allure of the ruins of Detroit and the ones mentioned here, suggesting not an "anti-tourism" but a tourist

delight, orchestrated participation in the adventure of imagining another time without having to imagining what political processes displaced those who lived in them.

⁵³ Kuklick, “Contested Monuments,” 135-169. Also see Fontein, *The Silence of Great Zimbabwe*. On another sort of contested colonial monument, the war memorial, see Gregory Mann, “Locating Colonial Histories: Between France and West Africa,” *The American Historical Review* at <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/110.2./mann.html>, accessed February 8, 2008.

⁵⁴ This quote appears on a postcard in a photography series entitled “A history of the world through ruins, 2005-2007” by Lida Abdul (given to me by Hugh Raffles whom I thank for them) as part of the “Memorial to the Iraq War” exhibit, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 23 May- 27 June 2007.

⁵⁵ See Collins’s essay in this volume.

⁵⁶ See Rao’s essays in this volume.

⁵⁷ See Hunt’s essay in this volume.

⁵⁸ See Chari’s essay in this volume.

⁵⁹ See Azoulay, “Has Anyone Ever Seen a Photograph of a Rape?”, 217-287.

⁶⁰ See Azoulay’s essay in this volume.

⁶¹ Chari, this volume.

⁶² Grandin, *Fordlandia*.

⁶³ Greg Grandin, “Touring Empire’s Ruin: From Detroit to the Amazon,” *The Nation*, June 23, 2009 at www.thenational.com/print/article/touring-empires-ruins-detorit-amazon accessed 6/17/2010. See his essay in this volume.

⁶⁴ This is not a focus of the current fascination with “The Fabulous Ruins of Detroit,” at www.detroityes.com/home.htm, accessed 7/8/10, or Witold Rybczynski, “Exploring Detroit’s Beautiful Ruins” at <http://www.slate.com/id/2213969> accessed 5/8/10.

⁶⁵ See Michael Hodges, “Detroit’s ruins bring visitors, but rankle critics within the city,” *Detroit News*, at detnews.co/article/20100701/OPINION01/7010331/Detroit-s-ruins-bring-visitors-- accessed 7/1/10.

⁶⁶ On the relationship between people and debris and on the affective space produced by living in piles of rubbish and ruined environments see Navaro-Yashin’s analysis of Lefkosha/Lefkosa, a city divided since the Turkish invasion of Northern Cyprus in 1974 in “Abjected Spaces.”

⁶⁷ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

⁶⁸ Abeng, *No Telephone To Heaven*, 1. I thank Meredith Edwards of Furman University for alerting me to Abeng’s use of “ruinate” when I delivered a version of this essay in February 2011.

⁶⁹ El-Haj , *Facts on the Ground*, 164.

⁷⁰ See Cohen, “The Politics of Planting” and Khalidi, *All the Remains*. I thank Jennifer Lynn Kelly for the references cited here, for pointing me to the Afforestation Project, and for sharing her research with me.

⁷¹ “Dreams of Home” created by the children of Lajee Center with Rich Wiles.

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- ⁷² I thank those at the Lajee Center for sharing with me their publications, the photographs that children took and the stories they collected when I visited in 2008.
- ⁷³ El-Haj illustrates this point in detail. Joe Masco, John Collins, and Vyjayanthi Rao each look to different features of state-managed ruins in their essays in this volume.
- ⁷⁴ See Joe Masco, this volume.
- ⁷⁵ Bearsley-Murray, “Vilcashuaan: Telling Stories in Ruins,” 212-231. Also see Jaguaribe, “Nationalist Narratives and Architectural Forms”; Bissell, “Engaging Colonial Nostalgia,” who looks at the critical purchase that colonial nostalgia can afford in the face of devastated landscapes and “dimming memories of modernity,” Swarms quoted in Bissel, 21.
- ⁷⁶ Rao, this volume.
- ⁷⁷ On the history and contemporary battles over the theft, protection, and repatriation of American-Indian remains and objects see Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustice*.
- ⁷⁸ Stoler, “The Carceral Archipelago of Empire.” Keynote address for the conference, “The Political Life of Documents,” University of Cambridge, 16 January 2010.
- ⁷⁹ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 163.
- ⁸⁰ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 182,170.
- ⁸¹ Hunt, *Colonial Lexicon*.
- ⁸² See Szmagalska, “Repossession.”
- ⁸³ Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, 67.
- ⁸⁴ Nixon, “Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor.” Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 27-28; Biehl, *Vita*.

⁸⁵ Biehl, *Vita*, 18.

⁸⁶ Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*.

⁸⁷ Lloyd, "Ruinination."

⁸⁸ Bauman, *Wasted Lives*.

⁸⁹ On oil spills that have mattered less, see John Vidal, "Nigeria's Agony Dwarfs the Gulf Oil Spill: The US and Europe Ignore It," *The Guardian*, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/may/30/oil-sills-nigeria , accessed 6/5/10.

⁹⁰ On the Ward Valley Nuclear Waste Dump proposals of 1996 and the successful campaign that suspended its construction in 1999, see www.alpinistas.org/env/ward.ward.html, accessed February 8, 2008.

⁹¹ See Tatz, Cass, Condon and Tippet, "Aborigines and Uranium: Monitoring the Health Hazards," 3.

⁹² See Tatz, et. al, "Aborigines and Uranium: Monitoring the Health Hazards."

⁹³ Coronil, "Editor's Column: The End of Postcolonial Theory?", 645.

⁹⁴ See Stoler, *Haunted by Empire*. Also see de Genova, "The Stakes of an Anthropology of the United States."

⁹⁵ Agee and Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

⁹⁶ Stewart, *A Place on the Side of the Road*, 90-112.

⁹⁷ Stewart, *A Place on the Side of the Road*, 96.

⁹⁸ Stewart, *A Place on the Side of the Road*, 111.

⁹⁹ Pemberton, "The Specter of Coincidence."

¹⁰⁰ See Daniel, this volume.

¹⁰¹ See Hunt, this volume.

¹⁰² It is estimated that eighty-two million “bomblets” were dropped in Vietnam between 1961-1973. Duds from those continue to be found in forty-three of the sixty-five provinces in Vietnam, thirty years later. Similar cluster bombs were used by the U.S. in Kuwait in 1991 and in Afghanistan in 2001. See Ellen Massy, “Disarmament: will the U.S. Finally End Cluster bomb Imports?” Inter Press Service at http://ipsnews/net/news.asp?idnews_38614.29, accessed December 2007. The estimates of unexploded ordnance range between 300,000 tons to as much as 800,000 tons. I have taken the more conservative estimate.

¹⁰³ Fox, “Chemical Politics and the Hazards of Modern Warfare.” Also see Fox, “One Significant Ghost.” Also see Weisberg, *Ecocide in Indochina*; Browning and Forman, *The Wasted Nation*; Whiteside, *The Withering Rain*; Schuck, *Agent Orange on Trial*.

¹⁰⁴ In a recent study of dioxin use by U.S. troops in Vietnam, epidemiologist Jean Stellman at Columbia University estimates, on the basis of detailed lists of over nine-thousand herbicide spray missions, that far more dioxin was sprayed than any government study has ever acknowledged. See “Columbia University Study of Agent Orange and Vietnam Veterans,” http://www.nypcancer.org/prevention/issue6/sop_age_ora.html, accessed February 8, 2008. Also see the searing photographs by the Welsh photo-journalist, Philip Jones Griffiths, (London: Trolley Ltd., 2003).

¹⁰⁵ In May 2005 a lawsuit filed by Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange against the chemical companies was dismissed. In July 2005 a program to investigate the health and

environmental damage caused by the defoliant was cancelled before it began. See Declan, “U.S. Abandon Health Study on Agent Orange.” The case was appealed and heard by Manhattan’s Second Circuit Court of Appeals in June 2007 when the court ruled again that the chemical companies were acting as contractors for the U.S. government and therefore shared its immunity. In the most recent round in March 2009, the Supreme Court refused to reconsider the ruling of the lower court.

¹⁰⁶ Aaron Glantz and Ngoc Nguyen, “Villagers Build Lives Out of Unexploded Bombs,” IPS Wire at www.ipsnews/net/mekong/IPIS_vire/bombs.html , accessed 5/3/2007.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Walcott , “A Dilemma Faces WI Artists.”

¹⁰⁸ Baucom, *Out of Place*.

¹⁰⁹ See Baucom, *Out of Place*, 172.

¹¹⁰ See Baucom, *Out of Place*, 1999.

¹¹¹ I thank Trisha Gupta for pointing me to this passage on Lahore.

¹¹² Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*.

¹¹³ Baucom, *Out of Place*, 186-87.

¹¹⁴ Faisal Devji’s comments at the Scarred Landscapes/Imperial Debris Conference, October 2006.

¹¹⁵ See Burbank and Cooper’s “Review of Marc Ferro’s *Le Livre Noir du Colonialisme*” where they make the important point that the “prosecutorial stance,” and the currency of indicting the colonial in France today and equating it with totalitarianism misses “the limits of power as actually exercised, the constraints on colonial regimes’ ability to

transform or to exploit,...their frequent dependence on indigenous economic and political actors whom they could not fully control,” 455-463.

¹¹⁶ On the history of immigrant housing in France, see Bernardot, *Loger les Immigrés*.

¹¹⁷ The point has been made with force by Balibar, “Uprisings in the ‘Banlieues’” and by others but with strikingly little historical analysis.

¹¹⁸ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

¹¹⁹ Stora, *Le Transfert d'une Mémoire*.

¹²⁰ Amery quoted in Sebald 2003.