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David Golumbia

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Quine's Ambivalence

David Golumbia

Translation was, and still is, the chief act of European colonization and imperialism in the Americas.

—Eric Cheyfitz (104)

The discourse of post-Enlightenment English colonialism often speaks in a tongue that is forked, not false.

—Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" (85)

One of the most striking developments in recent cultural studies is the growing recognition that modern forms of cultural oppression operate not only, perhaps not even principally, by means of directly repressive policies and practices. Instead, we have come to understand that one of the most important weapons in the modern colonial arsenal is what appears, on the surface, to be ambivalence within the colonial project itself. That ambivalence may arise at the level of the individual—in cultural representations of figures like the "good" slaveowner, the "kind" general or explorer or conquistador who is constantly at pains to hold back his "overzealous" troops, the "tolerant" ethnographer, or the withdrawn, emotionless, benighted administrator—and may also arise

within larger social structures. Perhaps the best-known instance of both of these levels of representation can be found in contemporary discussions of the contrasting figures of Cortés and Las Casas when viewed as conjoined aspects of the Spanish cultural apparatus in one of its baldest colonialist moments.¹

For whatever reason, we in the West seem only now able to begin to explain to ourselves, with a fair degree of painful self-recognition, how crucial a role the “good,” the “white,” and the “humane” poles in these ambivalent structures play in not only legitimizing and elaborating on but even carrying out the colonial project. This is not to suggest that Las Casas the individual was himself consciously attempting to aid the colonial effort—far from it—but only to say that, in many ways, modern extensions of the colonial project require their Las Casas as much as they require their Cortés. Modern ideological extensions of colonialism, in other words, are most effective—perhaps only possible, in the long run—when expressed and shaped in a largely ambivalent fashion.

What Homi Bhabha and other contemporary cultural theorists demonstrate at their best, I think, is not merely that such ambivalent practices *accompany* acts of imperialism and colonialism, but that there is a distinct logic or economics or structure of ambivalence that is cultivated by colonial power. That logic comes, in time, to implicate itself in almost every aspect of colonial and post-colonial culture, in no small part by maintaining certain forms of subjectivity that are required for the efficient operation of the colonial ideology, and its ambivalent visage licenses better-concealed acts of direct racism and exploitation.² It is with such logics of imperial ambivalence that this article is concerned; and in the history of philosophy, there are few figures who instantiate cultural ambivalence more fully than does the preeminent orthodox U.S. philosopher of the twentieth century, W. V. Quine. In particular, Quine’s most famous contribution to analytic philosophy—indeed, the contribution that might be said to inaugurate the project of contemporary analytic philosophy itself—namely, the Indeterminacy of Translation thesis, I will suggest, must be understood as in large part a theoretization of colonial ambivalence if it is to be taken seriously in its cultural context.

The writer with whom the notion of colonial ambivalence is most directly associated is Homi Bhabha, whose deconstructive ap-

proach to the study of the colonial and postcolonial situations focuses our attention on issues of subjectivity.³ In one of his best-known essays on colonial ambivalence, Bhabha writes:

the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. It is a disjunction produced within the act of enunciation as a specifically colonial articulation of those two disproportionate sites of colonial discourse and power: the colonial scene as the invention of historicity, mastery, mimesis or as the "other scene" of *Enstellung*, displacement, fantasy, psychic defense, and an "open" textuality. Such a display of difference produces a mode of authority that is agonistic (rather than antagonistic). Its discriminatory effects are visible in those split subjects of the racist stereotype—the simian Negro, the effeminate Asiatic male—which ambivalently fix identity as the fantasy of difference. ("Signs Taken for Wonders" 107–08)

These "split subjects," viewed through the lens of contemporary subjectivity, both produce and complicate a view of Western culture and its colonial ideology that largely works to absolve contemporary Westerners from their complicity in the destructive practices on which their cultures are based.

Elsewhere, in an essay on some forms of representational mimicry found in colonial scenes, Bhabha states:

the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both "normalized" knowledges and disciplinary powers. ("Of Mimicry and Man" 86; emphasis in original)

The complex discourse Bhabha calls mimicry, then, stages—one might say deliberately—a bifurcation in direct representations of both the colonist and the colonized, obscuring in part the direct operations of power in favor of a series of ideological representations whose relations to colonial practice are simultaneously clear and unclear. They are unclear from the perspective of the homebound masses, whose tacit assent to the colonial project is bought through obfuscatory representational strategies. They are clearer, paradoxically, in their effectiveness at stalling large-scale critique of, and resistance to, colonialism from within the colonizing country. As Bhabha continually hints, the subtleties of such strategies have not been lost on today's cultural conservatives, who are at least as expert as their outright colonialist counterparts in cloaking brutally racist "hot buttons" in the guise of an aggressive and (apparently) morally compelling egalitarianism. Such is one function of colonial ambivalence: to disguise convictions even our conscious subjectivities cannot endorse within contradictory and apparently "neutral" truisms we can tell ourselves with impunity.

Quine's ambivalence, at least on the surface, does not immediately lend itself to such analysis, but that his work displays a wide range of ambivalent strategies and structures is clear. A great deal of the extant orthodox work on Quine's philosophy points to potentially ambiguous or surprisingly self-contradictory elements in it. Some of the better-known examples include Quine's 1980 exchange with the analytic philosophers Michael Devitt and David Armstrong, wherein Devitt suggests that Quine may possibly be accused of holding a metaphysical doctrine with the paradoxical name "mirage realism." Devitt bases this charge on Armstrong's prior suggestion that Quine is in fact an "ostrich nominalist," who wants to accept the reality of universals but figuratively buries his head in the sand about any of the interesting, meaningful, or important consequences of holding that position (see Armstrong; Devitt; and Quine, "Soft Impeachment Disowned").

I offer this example merely to demonstrate that even the most conventional of Quine's commentators make reference to the appearance of ambivalence—in this case, about ontological commitments—in his philosophy. Other commentators have made more of the phenomenon, notably including some of the women philosophers who have written on Quine. Susan Haack, for example, writes that Quine champions both a "modest naturalism" that is

"reformist in character" and a "scientistic naturalism" that involves "significant restriction and revision of the traditional epistemological canon" (336). Not surprisingly, she suggests that there is an "ambivalence in Quine's naturalism" (337). Similarly, Miriam Solomon writes that there is "much apparent paradox . . . in W. V. Quine's writings," that "no consensus has been reached on the nature of Quine's point of view" (113). And though Solomon argues that a single doctrine called "natural empiricism" underlies Quine's point of view in general, she nevertheless concludes that "there is serious internal inconsistency in Quine's work" (136). Even Quine's staunchest defender and closest professional colleague, Burton Dreben, writes that though he has "read and discussed with Quine, before publication, nearly everything he has written," he is nevertheless "continually surprised at [his] own misunderstandings" ("Putnam, Quine—and the Facts" 294); he goes on to characterize Quine as at once "a realist, a proud, 'robust,' one" and at the same time "a positivist, perhaps even a relativist" (295).⁴

Lest we assume that we are simply seeing the inevitable artifacts that arise in the course of interpreting the works of a deep and complex mind, we should note that Quine himself has encouraged, on occasion, the view that his own work is permeated with ambivalence. The clearest indication we have of this awareness on his part comes in one of his most philosophically general essays, the aptly titled "Relativism and Absolutism," especially in its chimeric ending:

The truth of physical theory and the reality of microphysical particles, gross bodies, numbers, sets, are not impugned by what I have said of proxy functions and of wildly deviant but empirically equivalent theory formulations. Those remarks had to do not with what there is and what is true about the world. I was showing that scientific discourse radically *unlike* our own, structurally and ontologically, could claim equal evidence and that we are free to switch. Still, we can treat of the world and its objects only within some scientific idiom, this or another; there are others, but none higher. Such, then, is my absolutism. Or does it ring relativistic after all? (295)

It seems odd for a philosopher so generally interested in (at least some) questions of metaphysics to suggest that his thought may be

characterized either as relativistic or absolutistic, given that those terms are often used to identify directly oppositional tendencies in modern thought. Rather than throwing his final question to his interpreters, then, I think that Quine here admits the openness of that question within his own work, suggesting that his philosophy overtly contains an ambiguity of the most general sort as to his own deepest metaphysical intuitions. The writing style could not be more plain: the stentorian tone of “such, then, is my absolutism,” then so directly and ironically undercut with the question no absolutist should be willing to entertain: “or does it ring relativistic after all?” Much as this passage evidences what even Dreben calls Quine’s “gnomic” style, these concluding words seem most easily taken for what they are: a clear suggestion that a large-scale ambivalence plays a crucial role in Quine’s philosophical—and perhaps more importantly, cultural—point of view.

Still, we need to go further to see the connections between this sort of ambivalence and the deeper sorts of colonial and ideological ambivalence that are the subject of this article. In order to see into the deep ideological ambivalence of Quine’s writings, then, we must do what analytic philosophy proper deems inappropriate, as it were by fiat: we must examine Quine’s works and writings from a historical and cultural perspective. We must strive, that is, to understand Quine’s works in their cultural contexts—an effort made no less fascinating by analytic philosophy’s insistence that cultural context must play little or no role in theory construction and evaluation. From the outset, though, it seems best to state that the project of interrogating Quine’s cultural politics need not imply that his work is all or only constitutive of those politics; that is, for the purposes of this argument, we can remain agnostic as to whether or not analytic philosophy can carry out its stated project by its own lights. Indeed, part of the insight cultural studies garners from psychoanalysis is that cultural forms can, in fact must, be both expressive of deep ideologies *and at the same time* capable of performing the surface-level operations to which they lay claim. Analytic philosophy’s claim to be outside of history and culture (a claim it makes very loudly), while obviously of great interest and of some note in what follows, is nevertheless in and of itself beyond the purview of my argument here.⁵

The Indeterminacy of Translation (IT) doctrine is arguably the most famous of Quine's contributions to analytic philosophy; those contributions together make him the most significant figure in orthodox twentieth-century U.S. philosophy. The IT doctrine, as expressed in an especially terse summary by the philosopher Andrzej Zabłudowski,

is this: the question whether a sentence A of a language has the same meaning as a sentence B of another language does not in general admit of a determinate answer; for (i) translation is empirically underdetermined: a language can be translated into another in many ways, mutually incompatible and yet compatible with all possible evidence (all truths, known or unknown, about the relevant speakers' dispositions to overt verbal behavior), and (ii) the choice between alternative translations that are compatible with all possible evidence does not involve any objective matter to be right or wrong about. (35)

One needs to treat this thesis with the utmost care, resisting the impulse to reduce it too quickly to a statement about one or another field of human experience or thought.⁶ It is unclear, for example, whether Quine in part means the thesis to be an empirically testable statement about actual (Quine would say "radical") translators in actual practice; whether, to the contrary, it is meant to be a speculative observation about "language in general" that is altogether independent of—even irrelevant to—any actual instance of translation, let alone any actual languages; or if, in fact, the doctrine applies to both situations, or to neither. Both Quine and his commentators write, at times, as if any one of these might be accurate. Furthermore, the doctrine is so enmeshed with a variety of other Quinean constructs—some of the more famous ones with the names "underdetermination of theory by evidence" (this closely related to the IT doctrine), "epistemology naturalized," "two dogmas of empiricism," "ontological relativity," "holism," "proxy functions," "stimulus analyticity," along with a wide range of contributions to mathematical and set-theoretic logic—that its fundamental point and purpose continue to be a matter of heated investigation.

Nonetheless, some general observations about the doctrine can be made. To begin with, it remains an object of prevailing in-

terest and attention among analytic philosophers. In part, this is due to its plain focus on the nature of language—language itself being one of analytic philosophy’s main subjects of inquiry. Quine seems to be making a fundamental observation about language in some sense—whether it is about all *extant* languages, or all *possible* languages, or *language in general* is a matter of considerable debate. Even more specifically, the IT doctrine is about *semantics*—meaning. Part of the observation seems to be that something we “naturally” or “habitually” understand about “our” use of language—that it “expresses” meanings that can be transparently transmitted in any one of a variety of language-specific “containers” (the way that the meaning contained in the German expression “Schnee ist weiss” can apparently be transparently transmitted into the English container “Snow is white”)—is wrong, or at least incomplete. In turn, this possibility raises questions about our everyday notion of meaning and about the bases of our theoretical and scientific talk.

For Quine, this doctrine is meant to contrast ordinary linguistic usage with the more hardened usages of science. It is in this part of Quine’s system that words like “observation categoricals,” “epistemology naturalized,” “stimulus analyticity,” “verbal behavior,” and so on occur, terms that emphasize Quine’s radical insistence on the relationship of scientific observation to everyday experience. For Quine, science—and ultimately physics—is the highest, best form of knowledge we as humans can attain (as far as we know). Physics anchors itself to observable stimuli—whether of the physical or human worlds—thus providing our best guess as to the construction of adequate theories of our world. Away from these stimuli (which are themselves subject to revision under the proper circumstances), without “facts of the matter” on which to rely, theory construction is fairly hobbled. As Quine writes at the beginning of his most famous work, *Word and Object*:

Retrospectively we may distinguish the components of theory-building, as we distinguish the proteins and carbohydrates while subsisting on them. We cannot strip away the conceptual trappings sentence by sentence and leave a description of the objective world; but we can investigate the world, and man as

a part of it, and thus find out what cues he could have of what goes on around him. Subtracting his cues from his world view, we get man's net contribution as the difference. This difference marks the extent of man's conceptual sovereignty—the domain within which he can revise theory while saving the data.
(5)

Though the IT doctrine seems to gesture, then, at the social character of language (the first sentence of *Word and Object* is “Language is a social art”), that quality is consistently downplayed in favor of the more reliable character of observation and inference from direct observation. For Quine, the important path is the one that leads, as the title of his most recent book has it, “from stimulus to science.”

While the philosophical thrust of the IT doctrine is critical to my argument, that thrust remains secondary to the *manner* in which Quine characteristically (perhaps, it can be argued, exclusively) presents the IT doctrine: through a thought experiment, or better, parable or anecdote, that is known as the “Gavagai story.” The Gavagai story illustrates the IT doctrine by proposing a scenario in which

the recovery of a man's current language from his currently observed responses is the task of the linguist who, unaided by an interpreter, is out to penetrate and translate a language hitherto unknown. All the objective data he has to go on are the forces that he sees impinging on the native's surfaces and the observable behavior, vocal and otherwise, of the native.
(*Word and Object* 28)

The parable gets its name when “a rabbit scurries by, the native says “Gavagai,” and the linguist notes down the sentence “Rabbit” (or, “Lo, a rabbit”) as tentative translation, subject to testing in further cases” 29). Through a variety of subtleties, the story is tailored to explain the linguist's investigation of assent and dissent in the unknown language, the reliance on observation sentences that track stimulation rather than stimuli themselves, and so on. Famously, the conclusion to which Quine invariably brings the story is this:

consider “gavagai.” Who knows but what the objects to which this term applies are not rabbits after all, but mere stages, or brief temporal segments, of rabbits? In either event the stimulus situations that prompt assent to “Gavagai” would be the same as for “Rabbit.” Or perhaps the objects to which “gavagai” applies are all and sundry undetached parts of rabbits; again the stimulus meaning would register no difference. When from the sameness of stimulus meanings of “Gavagai” and “Rabbit” the linguist leaps to the conclusion that a gavagai is a whole enduring rabbit, he is just taking for granted that the native is enough like us to have a brief general term for rabbits and no brief general term for rabbit stages or parts. (51–52)

It is enough to grasp the general point of the IT doctrine to say that Quine insists that “rabbit,” “rabbit stage,” and “undetached rabbit part” are all equally satisfactory and yet, taken as exemplary of interpretive strategies, *mutually incompatible* translations of “gavagai”: to be more precise, each translation points to a general, underlying theoretical scheme some of whose tenets, especially those more distant from observation sentences, may be incompatible with the tenets implied by the other two translations. In the philosophical literature, while the Gavagai story has remained a persistent object of interest, the rhetorical effects of couching the story in these terms—the variety of reasons that may serve to explain *why* and *how* Quine chose this setting and the reasons it remains a persistent means for telling the story—have all been largely unexamined.

This lack of critical attention may be no accident, and it is here that our investigation into Quine’s cultural politics can take solid hold (as I suspect the rhetoric in the preceding passages from *Word and Object* will have suggested to cultural theorists). From even the most general sort of cultural-historical perspectives, the resonances set up by the Gavagai story are startling. Colonialism—in this loose sense indicating in general the subjugation of native peoples and cultures by the imposition of military and ideological force—nearly always begins in what Mary Louise Pratt calls “contact zones”: physical and temporal places wherein a native population and colonialists, including all the aspects of their respective

cultures, come into contact (see *Imperial Eyes*). What is at stake in these moments is, to begin with, language, translation, understanding; and when “anthropologists,” “linguists,” and perhaps even “philosophers” are part of the colonial efforts, their attempts at “understanding” are determined by the broader political purpose of their mission, even if the linguists and philosophers may (like Las Casas) consciously resist that mission. Although a great deal of recent anthropological work has dedicated itself toward the interrogation of the political valences of such encounters,⁷ one notes none of that self-consciousness in Quine’s many rehearsals of the Gavagai story.

While Quine presents the Gavagai story again and again as a neutral, almost unimportant parable (even claiming that the “gavagai example has figured too centrally in discussions of the indeterminacy of translation” (“On the Reasons for Indeterminacy” 178), while including it in every one of his more than ten published discussions of the IT doctrine), the story tracks the form and even the content of one of the West’s most unpleasant cultural narratives: the direct imposition of colonial domination. The code words Quine uses to tell the story—“natives,” “jungle language,” etc.—are the very words that active colonialists used to tell their story, a story in which, of course, the “jungle language” is not at all a “language” in the sense that our “civilized” language is (see Anderson; Behar; Bhabha; Chefitz; Clifford and Marcus; Fabian; Strathern). The Gavagai story, read back through Western colonial history, is a skeletal version of an archetypal colonial story, shaved nearly clean of the racist and sexist markers that one associates with colonialist narratives of an earlier period. This observation is not made simply to attack Quine as a covert racist or atavistic colonialist; it is to point at the immense strangeness of the Gavagai narrative occupying such a central position in recent philosophical practice.⁸

Consider, for example, the very refined statement of Quine’s views found in the recent *Pursuit of Truth*. Here again, in typical fashion for Quine, a sustained discussion of the Gavagai story begins with setting the scene:

In my thought experiment the “source language,” as the jargon has it, is Jungle; the “target language” is English. Jungle is inaccessible through any known languages as way stations,

so our only data are native utterances and their outwardly observable circumstances. It is a meager basis, but the native speaker himself has no other. (38)

It is hard to imagine any other writer today, any other discipline, tolerating such generalized talk of “jungle,” of “native.” Read through the lens of more than three decades of critical anthropology and cultural studies, this way of setting the story seems, at best, uncomfortably touched by racist concerns. The rhetorical pressure, the theoretical pressure, collectively work to deny the role of context in ascertaining meaning (construed unphilosophically) in native actions. Reading more impressionistically, one senses a rhetorical parsimony with regard to “our” understanding of what the “native’s” actions finally “mean,” a kind of “inscrutability” (the word has, of course, some currency in analytic philosophy) in interpreting the “native” that resonates poorly with centuries of racist academic and intellectual work on “native,” “Oriental,” “Indian” and other non-European cultures.

Such parsimony toward “native” meanings, put differently, might seem very much in line with recent anthropological work—indeed, with anthropological work of much of the twentieth century. That may be just the point: for we have learned, much too late, that the assumptions Western culture has made about “natives” in actual history have been overweening, and thus have been among the chief licenses for colonial oppression and outright domination. We have imputed the colonialists’ values onto the “natives” and found the “natives” wanting. Sustained reflection, as well as extensive political and revolutionary work by the “natives” themselves, has forced us in the West to realize that, too often, when facing native cultures we simply do not know what we are seeing, how much we are missing, what we are not understanding, or even how to locate or pinpoint our lacks of understanding. That knowledge, or rather its lack, has often been used to sustain largely “relativistic” positions in anthropology and linguistics, beginning with those of Whorf and Sapir, extending through the writings of Geertz, and reaching full flower in more contemporary writers like Clifford, Marcus, Behar, Appadurai, Rabinow, Strathern, Abu-Lughod, and many others.

What these writers share, and what the Gavagai story, as

Quine repeatedly tells it, lacks so dramatically, is the explicit acknowledgment that there is something wrong in the colonial scene, something wrong in situating ourselves as the “interpreters” and the “natives” as the “interpreted.” That something, broadly stated, is an imbalance of power in which we position ourselves so that the important story, the important language, the important values and meanings, are all located in *our* culture and *our* language. As the cultural anthropologist Talal Asad has written,

the process of translation . . . depends on the willingness of the translator's *language* to subject itself to this transforming power [i.e., of translation itself]. I attribute, somewhat fictitiously, volition to the language because I want to emphasize that the matter is largely something the translator cannot determine by individual activity (any more than the individual speaker can affect the evolution of his or her language)—that it is governed by institutionally defined power relations between the languages/modes of life concerned. To put it crudely: because the languages of Third World societies . . . are “weaker” in relation to Western languages (and today, especially to English), they are more likely to submit to forcible transformation in the translation process than the other way around. (157–58)

It turns out that these assumptions themselves justify the tremendous amount of weight granted to questions of how we should interpret “native” language and culture. Thus, contemporary anthropologists have learned to take this reflective knowledge and to ask: “why should *we* ‘interpret’ native cultures?” That is, what grants us the right to be in the interpreter's seat? And the conclusion many anthropologists have come to, of course, is that nothing does—that in fact much of the outright colonialist's work takes place in such acts of positioning and that much of our modern Western ideology depends on buried colonialist logics and structures like this one.

This historical analysis is less far removed from Quine's philosophical concerns than it may seem. Remember, if you will, that the Gavagai story is used to generate a way of thinking about language that informs a remarkably large share of contemporary philosophical thought. Further, it does so through the trope of “trans-

lation,” a trope whose function in Western culture is just as complicated and overdetermined as the sketchy historical scene into which Gavagai writes itself. To put it as directly as possible, the Indeterminacy of Translation doctrine seems in some important respects a response to the cultural situation hinted at in the Gavagai story, the history and metaphysics concealed (or revealed) by the story. We might point, as Homi Bhabha does at least rhetorically, to “indeterminacy” as the name for Western “liberal” postcolonialism’s response to its own cultural memory of the scene of (metaphysical, linguistic, etc.) conquest.

It is striking, for example, that neither Quine himself nor any of his commentators even gesture at the two historical epochs in which something like radical translation must, of necessity, have occurred again and again: namely the colonizations of the African continent and of the Americas. Distant as the languages of these continents were from European ones, colonialists had to find means to translate radically not only the “native” languages into their own languages, but their own languages into “native” ones (a reciprocity notably missing from typical representations of the Gavagai scene). I note this fact to foreground the general appearance of *displacement* in the philosophical literature. These colonial encounters are among the most massive and long-standing events in the historical record, and to act as though there is some real question whether events like them have ever happened is quite remarkable. How odd that there is an entire segment of philosophical literature that asks, obliquely, the question, “has anyone ever been in this position?”—when the civilization itself in which the questioners live was *created* through the colonial assault that required such scenes to be enacted over and over again.⁹

Not only does this irony speak to a kind of general logic of displacement in the practice of philosophy, it points to a way of discussing Quine’s problem—whatever that problem is—that philosophy has wanted to studiously avoid, namely, looking at narrated examples of radical translation so as to see their bearing on the philosophical issues Quine raises. It is absolutely clear that language and translation and all the attendant metaphysical issues have been very much at issue at these moments:

Imperialist expansion, Christian evangelization, and the development of modern linguistics and anthropology have not

been merely coincidental. Each of these movements—economic, religious, scientific (and all of them political)—needed a global perspective and a global field of action for ideological legitimation and for practical implementation. To object that individual colonial agents, missionaries and field-anthropologists/linguists were mostly quite limited in their political horizons and in their subjective consciousness does not discredit the “world-system” or similar notions as heuristic tools in writing history. What counts is the factual existence of conditions allowing global circulation of commodities, ideas and personnel. (Fabian 72–73)

One thing those stories would reveal that the Gavagai story obscures is that, in most cases, the problem of translation was overcome not by subtle or philosophical considerations but by force—compulsion and bribery—and almost always at the terrible expense of the “native speakers.” One more thing: problems of indeterminacy haunted much less the “interpreter,” the “radical translator,” than they did the “native” (see Anderson; Chefitz; Fabian).

For example, Eric Cheyfitz points out in great detail how much of the conquest of the Indians of North America was accomplished by exploiting European concepts and terms that had no clear equivalents in Native American languages, while assuming a conceptual universality that made such incommensurability unthinkable, or thinkable only to the detriment of the native populations:

We need to ask ourselves . . . what words or phrases in the Algonquian languages under consideration . . . could translate the “the right of possession,” “the right of property,” and “actual possession,” explaining the always potential disjunction between the three phrases, such that the three have to be united *in one person* for a fully legal “title” to exist? (48)

Further, Cheyfitz asks,

how does one translate ideas of place grounded in conceptions of communal or social labor into ideas of place grounded in the notion of *identity*? The problem is not . . . how does one translate radically different systems of *property* into one another. But can one translate the idea of place as *property* into

an idea of place the terms of which the West has never granted legitimacy? (57–58)

After some haggling over the “purity” of philosophical discourse, it is clear that such historical and theoretical considerations are of real significance in the search for the purpose and force of Quine’s problem. Perhaps similar considerations may even have inspired some of Quine’s core intuitions about language.¹⁰ However, such considerations are ruled out by fiat in analytic philosophy and ruled out so strongly that philosophers, perhaps in the classic instance of reaction-formation, never ask the question whether such encounters *have ever* taken place. This omission, to me, is the characteristic problematic of recent analytic philosophy: a kind of haze of unknowing so strong that its participants themselves fail to realize the very possibility of their work displaying ideological commitments, of it being part of history.¹¹ It is no surprise to find Quine’s work making such commitments as well as denying the existence of those commitments, for one of the most apparent consequences of Quinean theory—to which I shall return in a moment—is that self-reflection and introspection are not productive modes for philosophical work.

To uncover the buried ideological commitments of the IT doctrine, we must think more carefully about the trope of translation in Western thought and the relation of that trope to what we are calling cultural ambivalence and to the colonial scene rehearsed by the Gavagai scene. Here, it is fortuitous that the works of Jacques Derrida (building on Walter Benjamin’s classic essay “The Task of the Translator”) and Homi Bhabha focus so precisely on the very trope Quine, and with him analytic philosophy, take to be central to philosophical theory. For while Quine’s philosophy starts in practice with translation (and with a scene of cultural translation), Derrida has written that “the philosophical operation . . . defines itself as a project of translation. More precisely, it defines itself as the fixation of a certain concept and project of translation” (*The Ear of the Other* 119–20).¹² One thing Derrida’s remark suggests is that the IT doctrine may not simply occupy the chronological or theoretical starting point for contemporary analytic philosophy; instead, or perhaps in addition to that, it may well emerge

as a theoretization of the starting point for analytic philosophy, for the ideational-ideological operation at its heart.

We have already suggested this possibility in general terms, but on closer examination the extent of the philosophical "operation" in the IT doctrine is far broader than it may at first appear (or than, to the analytic community, it has ever appeared). Let us begin by returning to Derrida's remarks on translation:

What does philosophy say? What does the philosopher say when he is being a philosopher? He says: What matters is truth or meaning, and since meaning is before or beyond language, it follows that it is translatable. Meaning has the commanding role, and consequently one must be able to fix its univocality or, in any case, to master its plurivocality. If this plurivocality can be mastered, then translation, understood as the transport of a semantic content into another signifying form, is possible. There is no philosophy unless translation in this latter sense is possible. Therefore the thesis of philosophy is translatability in this common sense, that is, as the transfer of a meaning or truth from one language to another without any essential harm being done. (*The Ear of the Other* 120)

To a reader familiar with Quine this analysis seems remarkable: for the characterization of translation employed here by Derrida is just the one used by Quine. Indeed, one of the best-known aspects of the IT doctrine is Quine's denial therein of the tenability of the "museum myth of meaning," the "'idea' idea." Yet, according to Derrida, without such "transports" of "semantic content," *philosophy is itself not possible*—meaning that according to Quine's IT thesis, which founds analytic philosophy on the denial of that "transport," philosophy itself is impossible.

Let us attempt to be more clear about what Derrida might mean by philosophy in this sense, for it is obvious that Quine does not think, at least in practical terms, that the IT doctrine makes philosophy impossible. In so doing, one must note that Derrida's elaboration on this point of view is even more startlingly similar to the IT doctrine, when he writes that philosophy depends on

the idea that translation as the transportation of meaning or of a truth from one language to another had to be possible,

that univocality is possible, and so on—the whole classical *topos*, you see. When I said that philosophy was the thesis of translatability, I meant it not in the sense of translation as an active, poetic, productive, transformative ‘*hermeneia*,’ but rather in the sense of the transport of a univocal meaning, or in any case of a controllable plurivocality, into another linguistic element. (*The Ear of the Other* 140)

What Derrida understands as the discourse, to which we have classically given the name “philosophy,” includes as one of its core concepts a view of *meaning* that is exactly the view the IT doctrine, as we have seen, is meant to undermine. If we allow to stand the suggestion that philosophy as a historical discourse in the West has a number of determinable ideological functions (to be determined, in this case), we can locate at the heart of that discourse the assumption and the assertion that meanings can be reliably transmitted between linguistic media. And Quine’s philosophy, at the founding of yet another named philosophical movement, takes issue with precisely that core assumption/assertion.

Rather than exploring in depth the particular consequences of this arrangement for the history of philosophy—again, fascinating as this analysis might be—let us instead bracket this feature of Quine’s philosophy as a crucial aspect of the *critical* arm of Quine’s ambivalence. Certain features in Quine’s philosophy—most notably the extremely critical views of positivism in his first major essay, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (1951), but other important features as well—partake of an interpretive perspective from which critique not just *in* philosophy but *of* philosophy as a discourse becomes visible. One way of reading Quine’s philosophical ambivalence is as an oscillation between such critique and, on the other hand, extremely uncritical and orthodoxy-bolstering theories (see Columbia, “Quine, Derrida, and the Question of Philosophy”). That Quine recognizes, at least in principle, the destabilizing possibilities of the IT thesis emerges in one of the oddest (because least philosophically thorough) moments in *Word and Object*, a moment of concession that does not, so far as I am aware, get repeated in Quine’s retellings of the Gavagai story:

consider how I have persisted in my vernacular use of “meaning,” “idea,” and the like, long after casting doubt on their sup-

posed objects. True, the use of a term can sometimes be reconciled with rejection of its objects; but I go on using the terms without even sketching any such reconciliation. What is involved here is simply a grading of austerity. I can object to using a certain dubious term at crucial points in a theory, on the ground that to use it would deprive the theory of its desired explanatory force; but I can still use and condone the term in more casual or heuristic connections, where less profundity of theoretical explanation is professed. Such grading of austerity is a natural adjunct of the scientific enterprise, if we see that enterprise in Neurath's way. (210)

Here, Quine explicitly refuses to specify how we, standing outside of the Quinean perspective, are to know where to draw the lines of this gradation—how to know where “meaning” and “idea” are justifiably referential and where they become ephemeral.¹³ Readers familiar with Derrida's work will see in this suggestion again more than a hint of what Derrida calls the deconstructive operation itself, a persistent and critical questioning of concepts that one knows one cannot, in toto, dispense with, precisely because they constitute core features of the conceptual apparatus one has taken in from the tradition one inhabits. There can be little doubt, from a historical perspective, that much of Quine's disciplinary appeal comes just from his willingness to entertain at least the spirit of such critical ideas.¹⁴

Yet there can simultaneously be little doubt that Quine's appeal arises just as strongly from the heavily orthodox aspects of his philosophy, and these orthodox or traditional elements—often associated with words like “science” and slogans like “facts of the matter”—play an absolutely crucial role in the IT doctrine. We have already seen how the Gavagai story suggests, in the ease with which it abstracts from a crucial scene of Western colonialism, important ideological purposes of the scientific and philosophical enterprises as these are constituted in the West. Those purposes, I want to suggest now, are both deeper and more widespread than may first appear.

To locate them most forcefully, we must step back for a moment from the IT doctrine in itself and think about the roles it is supposed to play in Quine's total philosophical project. While one

of its multiple purposes is to raise questions about meaning, synonymy, and so on, another of its purposes is to provide an entrée into one of the most controversial and, in the end, unsubstantiated features of his philosophy: his view of the “ontogenesis of reference.” Readers of Quine are familiar enough with the slogans and phrases associated with this project, specifically with the way that phrases like “stimulus analyticity” and “stimulus synonymy” spring rather directly from the IT doctrine itself. Here again, certain aspects of the rhetoric of the Gavagai story come to seem more important than they may have at first.

In my thought experiment the “source language,” as the jargon has it, is Jungle; the “target language” is English. Jungle is inaccessible through any known languages as way stations, so our only data are native utterances and their outwardly observable circumstances. It is a meager basis, but the native speaker himself has no other. (*Pursuit of Truth* 38)

Why is there this fascination with the passage from “outwardly observable circumstances,” through the bridge of native utterances, assent to and dissent from linguistic queries, to the “target” of English, with its well-known tools for analyzing and categorizing other tongues?¹⁵

The answer to this question, of course, has something to do with the story that is buried in Gavagai about the development of science. First appear the bare bones of stimulus—the buried and graceful movement from “this familiar desk manifests its presence by resisting my pressures and by deflecting light to my eyes” (*Word and Object* 1). Next, “our conceptual firsts are middle-sized, middle-distanced objects, and our introduction to them and to everything comes midway in the cultural evolution of the race” (4–5). These stages then lead to the development of the enormous cultural apparatus (along with its underpinnings) that now goes by the catch-all name Science. Seen in this light, Quine’s commitments can hardly be called buried. Simply, observation is primitive and the property of primitive peoples—the work done by the “native” who emits the phrase “gavagai,” or even “us” in our more “primitive” days—and science is advanced, the work of our “interpreter,” our “radical translator,” whose job is to analyze whatever

there is to be analyzed about primitive reference and to put those "facts of the matter" into scientific terms.

Consider *The Roots of Reference*, Quine's most explicit effort to explain the development of logic and language use, where throughout a rabbit (often a black rabbit) occurs repeatedly as exemplary for a child's language learning. How easily this example slides into the Gavagai story, and how neatly the "native" there becomes the "child" of *The Roots of Reference*, with individual development held exactly isomorphic with cultural evolution. (This fiction about cultural development, the "myth of progress," and so on, is one of the most thoroughly debunked myths in the last century of anthropological work—indeed, not just debunked, but shown to be a way of encoding a deeply held colonialist and racist ideology.) Whatever the personal facts, Quine's philosophy, early and late, demonstrates no awareness of current anthropological views on these matters:

what of the origins of [language and lore] in the race? It would be irrational to suppose that those origins were rational. The prehistory of science was probably a composite of primitive unconscious symbolism of the Freudian kind, confusions of sign and object, word magic, wishful thinking, and a lazy acquiescence in forms whose motivation had been long forgotten. ("On Mental Entities" 222)

Although talk of cultural evolution is most explicit here, the general perspective occurs as recently as the revised edition of *Pursuit of Truth* and "Structure and Nature," and perhaps most clearly in "In Praise of Observation Sentences" and even Quine's most recent work, *From Stimulus to Science*. In each of these works, odd and yet unmarked shifts from the "native's" uttering of "gavagai" to the child's "red" or "cat" occur, in each case making implicit the transition between the "natural" or "primitive" form of reference and its (implied) progress into the rational form of empiricism known as science (see Mohanty; Parsons).

Thus, for all the critical import of those aspects of the IT doctrine that call into question the value of concepts like "meaning" and "idea" and "concept" (and "intension" and so on), the IT doctrine has simultaneously the purpose of establishing a conceptual

or epistemological hierarchy, even an evolutionary pattern, wherein cultures and their habits of reference are ranked according to their degree of progress toward the absolute truths of science: “an absolutism, a robust realism . . . is part and parcel of my naturalism. Science itself, in a broad sense, and not some ulterior philosophy, is where judgment is properly passed, however fallibly, on questions of truth and reality. What is affirmed there, on the best available evidence, is affirmed as absolutely true” (“Relativism and Absolutism” 295). Of course, it is not Quine alone among analytic philosophers who considers the truth of science to be absolute, somehow a progression away from the “primitive” referential gestures of “natives.” Yet Quine’s theoretization of these conjectures is perhaps unique in its degree of stylization and compression, its systematicity, and its ability to conceal so many of its ideological vectors under a cloak of neutrality.

What remains for us is to articulate how these aspects of the IT doctrine coalesce into what I have called above a theoretization of ambivalence, one that goes by the name indeterminacy. We can get a glimpse of what this might mean in practice by turning again to postcolonial cultural studies. In particular, writing of the inevitable gendering of the process of translation, Gayatri Spivak states:

Language is not everything. It is only a vital clue to where the self loses its boundaries. The ways in which rhetoric or figuration disrupt themselves point at the possibility of random contingency, beside language, around language. Such a dissemination cannot be under our control. Yet in translation, where meaning hops into the spacy emptiness between two named historical languages, we get perilously close to it. By juggling the disruptive rhetoricity that breaks the surface in not necessarily connected ways, we feel the selvages of the language-textile give way, fray into *frayages* or facilitations. Although every act of reading or communication is a bit of this risky fraying which scrambles together somehow, our stake in agency keeps the fraying down to a minimum except in the communication and reading of and in love. . . . The task of the translator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audi-

ence at bay. The politics of translation from a non-European woman's text too often suppresses this possibility because the translator cannot engage with, or cares insufficiently for, the rhetoricity of the original. (180–81)¹⁶

The piece that has been missing from our story so far, then, is the subject. For as much as Quine's story is of language and meaning, it is clear that the grounding for the story is in Quine's peculiar variety of behaviorism, a behaviorism one of whose main functions is to deny the very existence of, that is to say the scientific measurability of, the subject. Even sympathetic commentators, writing of the Gavagai scene, point out that Quine's parsimony seems at odds with the real facts of translation, for the lack of evidence Quine insists on would not occur in real encounters between cultural groups (even if that encounter was hostile, as most such historical occurrences were).

Quine's commentators are thus justified in wondering which came first, behaviorism or indeterminacy? The insistence on no mental events being scientifically qualified, or the semantic and syntactic consequences of that disqualification? What I am suggesting here is that Quinean ambivalence, and the ability to modulate between these two ways of seeing the Gavagai scene, mask the representational task of the IT doctrine, which is to depict the Western scientific subject, the *modern* subject, in its abstracted and neutralized form, evolved from and contrasted with the "primitive" referential subject.¹⁷ As so often in modern colonial and post-colonial ambivalence, this task lurks beneath the surface of a highly multivalent story, but its concealed nature should not obscure for us the striking modernity of Quine's story:

there circulates a contingent tension within modernity: a tension between the *pedagogy* of the symbols of progress, historicism, modernization, homogenous empty time, the narcissism of organic culture, the onanistic search for the origins of race, and what I shall call the "sign of the present": the performativity of discursive practice, the *récits* of the everyday, the repetition of the empirical, the ethics of self-enactment, the iterative signs that mark the non-synchronic *passages* of time in the archives of the "new." This is the space in which the question of modernity emerges as a form of interrogation: what do I belong to

in this present? In what terms do I identify with the “we,” the intersubjective realm of society? (Bhabha, “‘Race,’ Time, and the Revision of Modernity” 245; emphasis in original)

It is striking how well this description tracks the outlines of the Gavagai story, whose ideological purpose can thus be characterized as reconfiguring the colonial story within the terms of an abstracted, scientific, contemporary subject of knowledge.

Consider the setting of the famous (and first direct) presentation of the Gavagai story, from chapter 2 of *Word and Object*:

What is relevant to our purposes is *radical* translation, i.e., translation of the language of a hitherto untouched people. The task is one that is not in practice undertaken in its extreme form, since a chain of interpreters of a sort can be recruited of marginal persons across the darkest archipelago. (28)

Why “untouched people”? What resonances does that phrase turn up, outside the linguistic realm toward which Quine urges us? Of course, one answer again is the “primitive,” the “virgin” (here, it seems important to tease out the latent sexualization of Quine’s terms),¹⁸ the mark of the true connection with nature which has long been a fantasy of the very existence of Western modernity. And to connect with that deepest primitive version of the self, a “chain” of “marginal persons”—a chain inviting us to conceive of the “native” as altogether not a “person”—extending toward that highly overdetermined “darkest archipelago.” And covering this rhetoric, the assertion—purely assertorial, lacking any and all historical reference—that this “task . . . is not in practice,” *a fortiori* then, “has not been,” undertaken in its “extreme form.” Reader, says Quine, fear not; for this story of the subject, of the rise of your modern subject, your subject of science, is without historical referent, is a pure product of nature in its most neutral, uncomplicated form.

The purest mark, though, of Quine’s own ambivalence is that he himself cannot so fully partake in the story of subjectivity he has laid out for his readers. As Thomas Ricketts writes in the con-

clusion of one of the most frequently cited and most authoritative orthodox interpretations of Quine,

I have spoken of Quine's list of scientific disciplines and in so doing of a doctrinal as opposed to a methodological characterization of science. It is significant that nowhere in Quine's extensive corpus is any such list to be found. Quine indicates the boundaries of science from within, through general and substantive scientific claims evoking what Quine calls his "realist" or "physicalist bias." . . . These statements, in what Carnap would term the material mode, are the resting point for Quine's philosophy. The convolutions in Quine's argumentation cannot then be bull-dozed away as some of my remarks perhaps suggest. For Quine himself lacks any position corresponding to my expository perspective from which to offer my description of the debate between him and Chomsky. The point of the rejection of analyticity is that there is no such perspective. (136)

Ricketts gestures here, consciously I think, exactly to what I am calling Quine's view of his own subjectivity, one buried in the narrative strategies of his philosophy but which is nevertheless, as I have suggested, inscribed in that philosophy at many points. This obfuscation seems remarkable in many ways, not least because Quine's own writings, both substantially and stylistically, point repeatedly toward such a reading. Quine *writes*—stylistically, rhetorically—as if he is writing an account of his own subjectivity, but he is largely, almost exclusively, *read* as though he is simply positing a philosophical view for abstract consideration.¹⁹

Nowhere is Quine's personal investment in his philosophical position more apparent, and more telling, than in the autobiographical *The Time of My Life*, wherein Quine describes his own mental life in terms much like those used by Ricketts. What is perhaps most remarkable in this volume is the absolutely barren way in which Quine depicts his own subjectivity, which is to say, his own inner experience (and his relations with others, insofar as these touch on his emotional life). Almost as striking is the methodical way in which almost all of Quine's narrative gathers itself around two connected rhetorical modes. The first, of course, centers on his professional life as a philosopher. The second focuses on Quine's

extensive world travels, his desire to “collect” his visits to various countries and states. Indeed, far more than half the book is taken up with largely affectless descriptions of the countries to which Quine has traveled. To a reader familiar with cultural-theoretical writing on travel and travel narratives,²⁰ this aspect of *The Time of My Life* seems more than anything meant to carve out a modern subjectivity, a postcolonial picture of the world no longer under Western domination, an atavism that dares not speak its name.

Quine’s “narrative” of his own ambivalent subjectivity comes to its climax in the final chapter of *The Time of My Life*, which carries the reflexive title “The Present Chapter”—and here the reader should recall the crucial role Bhabha enunciates for conceptions of the present and of self-presence in the determination of the modern subject. This remarkable episode in Quine’s writing offers readers his only direct reflection on the problems of subjectivity that we have been discussing:

This book has been mainly a factual account of external things and events as they have impinged on me and I in my faltering way on them. A perceptive reader may, however, have gained from these indices a clearer picture of my drives and character than I myself enjoy; for I have little bent for soul-searching. This deficiency was evident in the way I bought peace of mind in 1930 and again in 1944 at the price of subsequent misery. My way of coping with spells of nostalgia, loneliness, anxiety, or boredom over the years has been to escape into my projects. . . .

Only rarely do I lapse into a half hour of grief. I did so lately when writing of my fumbling of the project of a jaunt in West Texas with Ed Haskell; the plan can never be renewed, for his health has deteriorated. For the most part my only emotion is impatience. I work impatiently to finish each job, and thus squander the passing moment instead of savoring it.

I am deeply moved by occasional passages of poetry, and so, characteristically, I read little of it. (475–76)

Here, nearly *sui generis* in the book, Quine uses socially and personally emotional, evaluative words—“faltering,” “fumbling”—to describe himself. At one of the only moments in the 500-page vol-

ume where a sense of emotional responsibility develops—his “fumbling” of the West Texas journey with his lifelong friend Ed Haskell, now ill—rather than expressing tenderness or regret over his “fumbling,” Quine leaves that to the reader’s imagination and instead jumps rather awkwardly in mid-paragraph to offer a global statement of his lack of emotion.

The work Quine’s philosophy most efficiently performs, I have been suggesting, is the elaboration of and creation of a modern (relentlessly modernized) subject, a subject of science, a subject that serves an important ideological purpose but can bring Quine-the-person himself (who, like all of us, cannot escape history) no solace. Few actual Western persons can maintain at all times the rigid and sterile subjectivity prescribed in the ideology of modern science; the residue of this failure forms part of the substance on which cultural studies operates. But Quine’s drive to systematicity is well known, and it is therefore not altogether surprising that he should be able—at least on his own terms—to hold the construction of his own subjectivity within such proscribed boundaries.

In *The Time of My Life*, Quine’s discussion of his emotional life refrains from all but the most meager discussions of positive emotion. Contrast this with the robust and joyous self-descriptions, even while at death’s door, of the emotional life of a philosopher who chose to side unambiguously *against* the traditional and orthodox impulses of modern Western thought. I am thinking here of Paul Feyerabend, nearly Quine’s contemporary, whose recently published autobiography *Killing Time* paints his vision of the modern subject in a wholly different, far richer, light:

a moral character cannot be created by argument, “education,” or an act of will. It cannot be created by any kind of planned action, whether scientific, moral, or religious. Like true love, it is a gift, not an achievement. It depends on accidents such as parental affection, some kind of stability, friendship, and—following therefrom—on a delicate balance between self-confidence and a concern for others. We can create conditions that favor the balance; we cannot create the balance itself. Guilt, responsibility, obligation—these ideas make sense when the balance is given. They are empty words, even obstacles, when it is lacking. (174)

I choose these words nearly at random out of Feyerabend's extraordinary memoir of his life and thought during this century. Their sensitivity, deep sense of subjectivity, and responsiveness might serve as the best possible corrective for analytic philosophy as it stands today. Who would have expected—yet how else explain it, other than the dynamic of ideology and ambivalence I have described here?—that the man regarded as the idiosyncratic, irresponsible, and heterodox gadfly of philosophy (most famous for his “anarchistic” 1975 manifesto, *Against Method*) would describe his life, near its end, in terms of fulfillment and responsibility, while the man regarded with the highest degree of orthodox approbation would describe his own life in terms that implicitly speak only of emptiness, loss, and inexplicable atavism? Inexplicable, that is, unless one understands the tremendous ideological work analytic philosophy today finds itself faced with—work that its own practitioners rarely, I suspect, fully understand, let alone consciously endorse.

This is, again, not to say that philosophy can or cannot carry out the task of scientific reason it so explicitly assigns itself. Rather, it is to say that the underside of that task is always (always already, in the Western context) present, at least informing and more often constituting the shape of what looks, on the surface, explicit and “objective.” By continually denying the existence of its own repressed—the repressed contents, in an important sense, of the Western self—analytic philosophy, thus, reinforces the power that repressed has over its “conscious” expressions. Without efforts toward a reintegration of the subject and its repressed other—as we have learned from both postcolonial psychoanalytic theory and from Derridean (and Spivakian) deconstruction—there remains little choice but to continue to express a belated, defensive, and yet still tragically effective ambivalence. The lessons of history demonstrate that, lacking critical pressure from within, the projects in which such ambivalence is implicated will continue to have, and to exercise, their power.

Notes

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1. That is to say, modern discussions of European colonialism attempt to "complicate" the responsibility of Spanish culture for its colonization of the Americas by gesturing repeatedly at the condemnations of the colonial project offered contemporaneously by Las Casas, thus using the apparent moral perplexity of Spanish culture as a whole as a defense of contemporary cultural prejudices. This phenomenon is, of course, one of the main targets of Homi Bhabha's work; see *The Location of Culture*, throughout. For some detail on the history of the Spanish colonization of the Americas and Las Casas's resistance to it, see Las Casas, *Destruction of the Indies*. For an account of the role of signs and language in the Spanish colonization of Mexico that bears strongly on the argument presented here, see Glendinnen, "Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty" and *Ambivalent Conquests*.

2. The issue of subjectivity is addressed more fully toward the end of this article, but for background on the role of subjectivity in the creation and maintenance of colonial power, see, for example, Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*. For historical and critical background on the idea of a "structure" or "logic" of colonialism, see Kiernan; Szymanski.

3. Readers of earlier versions of this article have pointed out, correctly I think, that the concept of ambivalence I develop in this paper is properly suggested by, rather than exactly the same as, Bhabha's—in no small part because I see colonial ambivalence as thoroughly implicated in the colonial project, where Bhabha at times seems to hedge about its degree of implication.

4. Of course, these do not exhaust the critical literature on ambivalent aspects of Quine's work; see, in addition, Nelson, *Who Knows* (especially her discussion of Quine on the science/ethics and fact/value dichotomies, 130–36); Hao Wang's fascinating and under-appreciated *Beyond Analytic Philosophy* and "Quine's Logical Ideas"; and Bergström, "Quine on Underdetermination" and "Quine, Underdetermination, and Skepticism."

5. For a fuller discussion of the relationship of Quine's philosophical project to historicity in general, cf. my "Quine, Derrida, and the Question of Philosophy." For discussions of the cultural functions of contemporary analytic philosophy in general, cf. my "Rethinking Philosophy" and "Feminism and Mental Representation."

6. What follows is obviously only a brief overview of the issues and texts that make up the IT doctrine. For a fuller explication, in addition to the works by Quine cited below, cf. Hookway. Especially productive accounts of the IT doctrine and its place in Quine's total theory are found in Dummett; Føllesdal, "Indeterminacy and Mental States"; Gibson; Ricketts; Romanos; Rorty; Solomon; Stroud; and Zabłudowski.

7. See, for example, Behar; Clifford and Marcus; Errington and Gewertz; Geertz; Huizer and Mannheim; Marcus and Fischer; Minh-ha; and, for discus-

sions of more recent scenarios, see Appadurai. This is an extremely sketchy list meant only to demonstrate the wide availability of views of this sort in recent academic work.

8. To show how easily the skeletal colonial story takes on more obvious trappings of the colonial story itself, we need look no further than the 1995 Public Broadcasting Service three-part program, *Human Language*—oddly enough, an exposition and defense of Chomskyan linguistics, which the IT thesis is mistakenly said to support—in which the Gavagai story is sketched out in crayon drawings on posterboard. Quine’s “field linguist” is represented in these drawings by the archetypal Great White Hunter, complete with pith helmet and shotgun, who “queries” the “native” by aiming a large shotgun at the rabbit!

9. For relatively orthodox writing on Quine that, in each case, touches on this question at some point in the discussion, see Bar-On; Dummett; Hookway; Hylton; Romanos; Rouse; Schuldenfrei; and Zabłudowski. Some light is shed on these subjects in the work of Robert Feleppa (cf. *Convention, Translation, and Understanding* and “Physicalism, Indeterminacy, and Interpretive Science”) as well as that of Jennings, but very much from within an analytical framework.

10. This is one way of reading Quine’s repeated ruminations over languages and travel in *The Time of My Life*.

11. The most striking counterexample to this tendency, one which supports the view I offer here, is found in the recent work of Joseph Margolis; see, in particular, “Politics of Predication” and *Historied Thought, Constructed World*.

12. For related remarks in Derrida’s work, see “Des Tours de Babel” and “Letter to a Japanese Friend.” Also see Andrew Benjamin’s *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy* and “Translation and the History of Philosophy,” and Leavey.

13. Again, this fact has not escaped Quine’s commentators. Of special interest has been the question whether Quine’s notion of “meaning” is our everyday notion of the term, which Quine in this passage suggests it is not, and if not, whether Quine’s specialized notion has any applicability to our theory and practice. See, most famously and productively, Rorty, “Indeterminacy of Translation and of Truth.” Also cf. Allston; Harman, “Quine on Meaning and Existence”; and Putnam, “Meaning Holism,” for surveys of Quine’s notion(s) of meaning that make these problems at least partially apparent (as well as Putnam’s “Meaning of ‘Meaning,’” which contains some relevant comments); Dummett for an overview of the IT doctrine that raises some of these questions about meaning; and Harman, “Quine’s Grammar,” for related questions about Quine’s views of linguistics. Of course, this list is not exhaustive; many of the canonical discussions of the IT thesis turn on just what notions of “meaning,” “synonymy,” etc., are at issue in the thesis itself.

14. In addition to the works discussed here, I would point to the essays collected in *Ontological Relativity* (published, strikingly enough, during the last half of this century’s most obviously leftist and antitraditionalist moment in the United States) for Quine’s most clearly heterodox casting of the theories that, in a work like *Pursuit of Truth*, come out sounding far more orthodox and traditionalist.

15. While Quine explicitly states that the story could be told in the other direction—that is, of the “native’s” attempt to translate English—I am unaware of any retelling of the story, either by Quine or his commentators, that actually carries this out. In actual narrations of the Gavagai story, it is always the English linguist who does the investigation and the “native” whose language is the object of inquiry.

16. Some crucially apposite commentary to Spivak’s is found in part 4 of Ruth Behar’s *Translated Woman*.

17. For some telling hints about the relationship of the modern, "global" subject to its conception of the "primitive" one, cf. Appadurai.

18. Cf. Behar; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Glendinnen; Minh-ha; and Spivak for meditations on the sexualization of language in scenes of translation ("radical" and otherwise).

19. Aside from Ricketts, exceptions to this rule can also be found in Nelson, and Solomon. For a related perspective, see Smith. There is more than a hint of such an awareness as well in the writings on Quine by Burt Dreben (see "Quine" and "Putnam, Quine—and the Facts") and Hilary Putnam (cf. especially "'Two Dogmas' Revisited," "Convention," "Why Reason Can't Be Naturalized," "Meaning Holism," "A Comparison of Something with Something Else," and "Greatest Logical Positivist"). Other works that connect the IT doctrine with Quine's views of science and epistemology more generally include Føllesdal, "Indeterminacy of Translation and Under-Determination of the Theory of Nature"; Gibson; Romanos; Schuldenfrei; and Solomon.

20. See, e.g., Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Clifford and Marcus; Minh-ha; and especially Pratt.

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