

# Introduction

## *The Indies Mentality*

**O**n a winter evening a man sits by his bedside, waiting for the serene quiet of his country retirement to be interrupted by the delivery of a London newspaper. So opens “The Winter Evening,” Book 4 of William Cowper’s long poem, *The Task* (1785). The set piece is, without question, mundane; but therein lay its charm. Cowper’s careful attention to the oft-overlooked minutia of daily life is what made him the most popular poet of the English middle classes. In *The Task*, in particular, he delighted readers by capturing a level of experience at once familiar and uncharted: the things said, thought, seen, felt, and done so often that they fade without notice into the barely registered background of everyday life. Take, for example, the occasion of waiting for a newspaper and wondering what news will be inside. When Cowper’s paper finally does arrive, his survey of the chaotic landscape of “its map of busy life” forms one of the most memorable (and most critically commented upon) passages in *The Task*. But the interval of waiting that precedes this survey is worth dwelling upon. For in the pause of suspension just before Cowper receives his folded-folio paper “map,” we get a mental “map” of his speculative anticipations:

... who can say  
What are its tidings? have our troops awaked?



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Or do they still, as if with opium drugg'd,  
Snore to the murmurs of th' Atlantic wave?  
Is India free? and does she wear her plumed  
And jeweled turban with a smile of peace,  
Or do we grind her still? (4.24–30)

In the “Advertisement” that prefaces *The Task*, Cowper explains that he composed the poem through a process of free association, connecting one subject to another by “pursuing the train of thought to which his situation and turn of mind led him.” Whether or not we take Cowper at his word, it is significant that the “train of thought” he pursues in this passage leads straight from one side of the globe to the other. In physical space, oceans and continents separate India from North America, the battlegrounds of the American War from the conquered territories of the East India Company. But in Cowper’s mental map these regions are adjacent to one another: only the briefest of end-stopped pauses lies between them.<sup>1</sup>

Cowper’s collapse of the vast distance between India and the Atlantic world captures a collective habit of mind that would have felt familiar and intuitive to his readers. They too expected to see Britain’s most distant colonies paired with one another, not only when they opened a newspaper, but also when they read a poem, or attended a play, or debated politics at a dinner party, or stopped to look at a satirical cartoon in a print-shop window. In 1785 this expectation was a commonplace one; today it is an artifact of a whole view of the world utterly remote from our own. The aim of *The Global Indies* is to reconstruct one way in which late Georgian Britons viewed the world, and to see what new insights this perspective might have to teach us about the literary and cultural history of British imperialism. Linking the two Indies together over the course of this book will prompt us to relearn much of what we thought we already knew about key topics in eighteenth-century colonial studies, including race, slavery, class, and sociability. In the more immediate context of *The Task*, the two Indies will help us recover a rich theoretical vein in Cowper’s engagement with his global-imperial present.<sup>2</sup>

Very often in scholarship we unintentionally gloss over the strangeness of eighteenth-century ideas about the world. This is partly due to our



sense that the globe is a “transparent,” self-evident object of analysis. But, as Ayesha Ramachandran reminds us, the early modern “discovery” of a new continent across the Atlantic ushered in an epistemological crisis about the “intelligibility and scope of the known world.” Early modern “worldmakers” solved this crisis by reshaping the world: synthesizing slivers of knowledge into a new “collective unity,” a new “coherent world picture,” a new “conceptual framework.” Although the phrase does not appear in Ramachandran’s account, “the Indies” was an important organizational device in the early modern period’s new “system of order” for the globe. The age of discoveries first gave Asia and the Americas a common name: the “East and West Indies,” “the two Indies,” and, very often, simply “the Indies.” As every schoolchild knows, this shared moniker for two places that could hardly be more distant was the result of a famous mistake: Columbus’s misidentification of his so-called Caribbean discoveries as the East Indies. Yet this origin story obfuscates the more crucial point: the shared name stuck long after any misapprehension about the location of the two Indies had been rectified. Shakespeare’s *Merry Wives of Windsor* illuminates one reason for the pairing’s staying power: “I will be cheater to them both, and they shall be exchequers to me. They shall be my East and West Indies, and I will trade to them both.” Asia and the so-called New World were both staging grounds for European fantasies about the accumulation of riches through trade and colonization.

This is why the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives one definition of “the Indies” as “a region or place yielding great wealth or to which profitable voyages may be made.” Fantasies of gain were load-bearing walls in the new conceptual structures fashioned by early modern Europeans to house and tame knowledge of the world. These fantasies only intensified in the ensuing centuries, as the bloody work of colonialism enabled dreams of wealth extraction to be materialized. Thus, even as the progress of geographical knowledge in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries sundered the two Indies from one another in European cartography, they remained, in Jonathan Gill Harris’s formulation, “conceptually proximate.” Fast-forward to 1785 and they were still ever so close to one another in late Georgian mental maps of the world.<sup>3</sup>

Given its early modern pedigree, the pairing of the two Indies in *The Task* might be deemed, in Raymond Williams’s terms, “residual.” But



it would be a mistake to dismiss the Indies as a dead cultural artifact, a fossil or relic of an earlier time. Marc Bloch, a historian of medieval France, said of the remarkable survival of “the royal touch” (the idea that a king’s touch would cure scrofula): “Its longevity involves no degeneration. On the contrary, it retained a profound vitality; it continued to be endowed with a power of feeling that remained constantly active; it adapted itself to new political . . . conditions; and it assumed forms that had hitherto been unknown.” Just as the royal touch survived and thrived centuries after we would expect such magical thinking to have lost its charm, the Indies found renewed influence at a time when we might expect to see it debunked and discarded. In Britain, the peak of its potency as an explanatory framework for comprehending the world occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

A watershed in the history of the Indies pairing was the Seven Years’ War (1756–63), which is also the historical jumping-off point for this study. Arguably the first global war, its battle fields spanned four hemispheres and five continents. After centuries of straggling behind other European powers in the race to lead the global economy and amass colonial possessions, Britain emerged from this conflict in a nearly uncontested position of geopolitical dominance. Most importantly for this study, victory over France and its allies secured Britain a worldwide empire whose outline traced the shape of the Indies. This was the source of the pairing’s renewed “vitality.” In the early modern period, the Indies had been amalgamated by virtue of fantasy. Post-1763, India and the Americas were densely interwoven in the fabric of the global economy, stitched together by the threads of British imperial policy. Within just a few years consensus dictated that the empire’s most distant territories should be governed systemically, as a single unit. Above all this meant *thinking*—and *linking*—the two Indies together. Inevitably, the proliferation of economic and institutional ties endowed the pairing with new momentum, so that it seemed even more commonsensical and inevitable—hence, Cowper’s “turn of mind.” Once it was ingrained as a habit of thought, the conceptual pairing of the two Indies propelled more policies linking them in practice, which in turn generated more concrete ties, which further fueled conceptual linkages, which became more firmly entrenched than ever before. What we have here is not a tautology but a *mentalité*: what I call the Indies mentality.



Although the study of *mentalités* never gained much traction in the United States outside medievalist circles, it is one of the twentieth century's great keywords in European scholarship. The term is a legacy of the *Annales* School. This loosely organized movement, established by Bloch and Lucien Febvre in the 1920s, eventually came to dominate the humanities and social sciences in the postwar shakeup of the French academy. The unusually low profile of the *Annales* School in the United States is unfortunate for several reasons, not least because it has distorted our reception of important French thinkers whose work took shape in or adjacent to its milieu, most notably Michel Foucault. More importantly, *l'histoire des mentalités*—which André Burguière calls the guiding “*spirit of the Annales*”—represents a powerful and underutilized methodological resource for cultural studies of the distant past. Two elements are particularly indispensable in the context of the present study. First, *mentalités* interrupt our natural tendency to assume that distant historical subjects perceived, thought about, and emotionally responded to the world in the same ways we do. Second, writing the history of any given *mentalité* involves simultaneously surveying multiple cultural registers. Instead of privileging one arena of experience or cultural production at the expense of all others, *mentalités* include everything from unconscious habit and common sense to affect and emotion, elite artistic practice and speculative thought, official policy and state-sponsored ideology—as well as the material conditions and institutional arrangements that subtend and result from all of the above. Much like the tradition of Marxist cultural studies pioneered by Stuart Hall in the 1980s, the study of *mentalités* tacks across and between all of these registers with the aim of “conceptualiz[ing] the ensemble of social relations which make up a whole society.”<sup>6</sup>

To imagine that an outmoded method from the field of history might yield gains for literary scholars is already to enter into the mindset of Bloch and Febvre. Although both were historians, they rejected the “fearful schisms” of knowledge into “cloistered disciplines” in favor of a resolutely interdisciplinary approach. *Annales* School historians borrowed freely from economics, critical geography, sociology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, archaeology, and literary studies—any discipline that could help explain societal change was recruited to the cause. My return to the



history of mentalités is undertaken in this spirit. Since revisiting an outdated approach to historical analysis might seem akin to a rejection of more recent innovations in that field, let me emphasize that this is not the case. My point is not that we should turn back the methodological clock and erase a hundred-odd years of historiographical gains. To the contrary, this book is deeply influenced by recent trends in British imperial history. However, there is no reason that older historical methods may not be mined for new insights. A retooled and updated version of the history of mentalités might open a new path through a current methodological impasse in literary studies. Before we can chart this path forward, we need to first get a better sense of what the study of mentalités entails.

### Mentalités and Non-Representationalism

Robert Mandrou defined mentalités (a term he helped popularize) as “visions of the world,” and it is often glossed as “worldviews.” An ocular metaphor is also used by Bloch in a passage from his methodological treatise that does not explicitly name its object as mentalités, but is helpful nonetheless: “Clouds have not changed their shapes since the Middle Ages, yet we no longer see in them either magical swords or miraculous crosses. The tail of the comet cited by the great Ambroise Paré was probably very little different from those which occasionally sweep across our skies. Yet, he thought he saw in it a full suit of curious armor. Compliance with universal prejudice had bested the habitual accuracy of his gaze; and his testimony, like that of so many others, tells us not what he actually saw but what his age thought it natural to see.” To Bloch’s examples we might add another: the seven landmasses we call continents have not changed their arrangement on the surface of the planet, but when eighteenth-century Britons looked at the globe they very often saw the Indies, whereas we do not.<sup>8</sup>

When Bloch draws a distinction between what Paré “actually saw” and “what his age thought it natural to see,” the implication is that mentalités are a distorting influence, perhaps even a kind of false consciousness. It would be easy to understand the pairing of the two Indies in this way: as a way of seeing the world that was, we now know, wrong. Yet I do not consider the Indies mentality to be a lesson in inaccuracy or a prod-



uct of confusion. Instead, I take it as a reminder of the contingency of all geographical categories, including our own. In *The Myth of Continents*, critical geographers Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen point out that there is in fact no hard empirical basis for even the most seemingly self-evident geographical fact: our division of the earth's landmasses into seven continents. All geography, they suggest, ultimately boils down to "metageography": a "set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world." All geography is ideological. To use Henry Lefebvre's terms, the "production of space" occurs not only in man-made environments, but also on the largest possible geographical scales. Yet Lewis and Wigen's point is not that a social constructivist free-for-all is in order. Rather, they call for greater historicist attention to how different "metageographical categories" at once respond to and engender different ensembles of material and ideological conditions. The history of the Indies mentality is a veritable object lesson in how ideological conditions reshape material circumstances. In the sixteenth century, the Indies was a European fantasy; by the end of the nineteenth century, British imperialism had remade what Giovanni Arrighi calls "world *political-economic space*" in this fantasy's image. In this sense, we might describe the Indies mentality in the same way Doreen Massey characterizes contemporary globalization discourse: a "vision of global space" that "is not so much a description of how the world is, as an image in which the world is being made."<sup>9</sup>

How, exactly, does "an imaginative geography" like the Indies relate to the world "being made" in its "image"? Not, I would argue, via "representationalism." This is the term Karen Barad uses to name "the belief in the ontological distinction between representations and that which they purport to represent." The problem with representationalism, according to Barad, is that it—like the Newtonian physics it is based upon—is simply wrong. A theoretical physicist by training, Barad explains that "the heart of the lesson of quantum physics" is that "*we are a part of that nature that we seek to understand.*" Quantum physics proves beyond a doubt that "*No inherent/Cartesian subject-object distinction exists.*" Representations are not, in fact, ontologically distinct from "that which they purport to represent." Barad's ontological argument dovetails with Stuart Hall's important reformulation of Louis Althusser's recovery of Marx's "neglected



epistemological propositions.” Taking onboard Marx’s epistemology requires breaking with a positivist empiricism that would have us draw a clean line of demarcation between abstract mental events and concrete things in the world. For Marx, Hall clarifies, “ideas have a material existence.” One implication of this stance is that the material world doesn’t exist outside ideology in a realm of pure concreteness. Here we find what Gayatri Spivak calls “the necessity for de-fetishizing the concrete.” Marxist cultural critique is not a search through the rubble of false consciousness to find a buried and obscured “authentic truth.” To the contrary, it seeks to understand how mental events become inscribed in material conditions. Or, put another way, how ideology is implicated in the reproduction (with a difference) of the world.<sup>10</sup>

Marx, Hall, Spivak, and Barad all share a commitment to philosophical realism. Their breaks with empiricist epistemology stem from the belief that it simply cannot account for the complexity of the world and our experience/knowledge of it. But there are other paths forward. To return to Barad’s framing of the issue, if we cannot stand “at a distance” and accurately measure or represent the world (since we are a part of it), then we simply need to find “a way of understanding the world from within and as a part of it.” This is how I understand *l’histoire des mentalités*: as a commitment to analyzing historically distant societies “*from the inside*” of their own conceptual frameworks. Later in this introduction I spell out the resonances between this method and the most compelling components in Althusser’s structuralist Marxism. For now, let’s close the gap between Barad’s diffractive methodology and *l’histoire des mentalités* by updating Bloch’s ontology. In the passage quoted above, Bloch seems to suggest that mentalités are a distorting influence akin to false consciousness. Burguière picks up on this strain of representationalism when he defines mentalités as “the filter of cultural arrangements” through which the “natural world” passes as it is socially appropriated. But we would be equally right to detect a hint of non-representationalism in the passage quoted above, and in the project of the history of mentalités more generally. What would qualify as an *accurate* representation of a comet? Bloch’s first example does not even admit the posing of this question: “Clouds” do not lend themselves to right or wrong, accurate or inaccurate, representations. The medieval cloud-gazer is not “bested”





by “universal prejudice” when he sees “magical swords” float across the sky, nor do we succumb to delusion when we spot automobiles and personal computers in an imminent rain-shower. Clouds belie the central tenet of representationalism and point to a profound (but latent) challenge at the heart of l’histoire des mentalités: different historical, societal, and material conditions don’t simply lead to different representations of the same world—they produce different worlds.<sup>11</sup>

*The Global Indies* is not a study of empirically verifiable representations of the world that turn out to be right or wrong in the end; nor is it a bid to recover how eighteenth-century authors reflected or represented the world as they stood apart from it. Instead, this book investigates how literature and other cultural productions participate in what Barad calls the “ongoing performance of the world in its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility,” and what Ramachandran and a number of other literary scholars call “worldmaking.” In the field of British imperial history we have excellent scholarly accounts of the world-systemic transformations wrought by the rise of British imperialism post-1763. We understand fairly well how Britain reshaped the world at the level of military advances, parliamentary politics, forced migrations, and extractive economies. However, we have yet to put a fine enough point on the crucial question of how the discursive practice of linking Britain’s colonies in India and the Americas relates to the proliferation of economic, political, and institutional linkages between them. To understand the remaking of the world, we must attend to literature’s worldmaking capacities.<sup>12</sup>

Earlier, we saw that wringing sense out of even a few lines of Cowper’s poetry requires reconstructing and fully re-inhabiting a view of the world very different from our own. Let us, then, return to those lines from *The Task* to stage a more thorough exposition of Cowper’s Indies mentality.<sup>13</sup>

### Cowper’s Collective “Turn of Mind”

Although mentalités include everything from unconscious habit to high art, there is no better entry point to a historical mentality than its outmoded common sense. Because it operates under a “naturalistic illusion,” common sense feels like “authentic truth” when it is in fact highly

ideological: a conditioned (and usually collective) habit of mind. Like all habits, common sense is formed through repetition. That there is nothing more repetitive than the institution of the daily newspaper is a point Benedict Anderson made long ago. Like Julie Ellison, Kevis Goodman, and Daniel O’Quinn, I believe that the quickest path to making sense of “The Winter Evening” lies in the messy, untamed pages of the newspapers that were its source texts. During the winter of 1783–84, when Cowper was writing *The Task*, he was also avidly reading several London papers. If the poem’s speaker expects to open his newspaper and find dispatches from America and India printed in vertical contiguity there, it is at least in part because Cowper (the poet) had done so many times before. In the final months of 1783, dispatches from India and North America were routinely printed in consecutive paragraphs. Cowper could open any issue of the *Morning Chronicle* (a London daily he read religiously) from the first week of October 1783, for example, and he would inevitably find a juxtaposition like the one he anticipates in “The Winter Evening.” In the paper for Friday, October 3, a whole column of news about the cessation of hostilities in New York pivots without comment or explanation into a paragraph about a naval engagement between French and British fleets off the coast of Pondicherry. The transition is as abrupt as an end-stop; and, given the number of stray newspaper puffs that scholars have found laced through the stanzas of “The Winter Evening,” it is entirely plausible that it—or another one like it—gave impulse to Cowper’s poem. But to search for a single origin of these lines is to miss the point, which is precisely their non-singularity. If Cowper’s “turn of mind” led him straight from America to India it is because this itinerary had become routine not only in newspapers but also in print, visual media, and performance.<sup>14</sup>

Now a word of caution is in order. The landscape of the late Georgian newspaper page is dizzyingly chaotic. Columns of news items are unsorted (thematically, temporally, or geographically), so that one paragraph follows the next seemingly (and in many cases truly) without any principle of order or selection. Thanks to the work of Donna Andrew, O’Quinn, and Goodman, we know that this pandemonium of paragraphs provided safe cover for reporting news that could not be openly printed. What’s more, the disordered page provoked a playful eye: news-

paper “reading” was an active pursuit more reminiscent of *Emma*’s riddles and today’s crossword puzzles than the transparent paragraphs of this morning’s *New York Times*. The impulse to wring meaning out of mayhem was thus one that all Georgian newspaper readers shared. Reading diagonally across columns, or supplying connective tissue between subsequent but seemingly disconnected paragraphs, eighteenth-century readers turned what Cowper called the newspaper’s famine “of no meaning” into a feast of signification.<sup>15</sup>

In “The Winter Evening,” Cowper simulates this experience for readers as he treks across the harrowing topography of the newspaper page. By sneaking tidbits from the real papers into his poem, Cowper invites readers to transpose interpretive practices across mediums. Scanning the pages of the *Morning Chronicle* on October 3, 1783, readers would have been expected to make the cognitive leap from New York to Pondicherry. Although the connection between the two paragraphs went unprinted, they would have little trouble supplying it: both cities were battle fields in the American War. When Cowper transplants the juxtaposition of “th’ Atlantic wave” and India from the newspaper to *The Task*, he invites his readers to take part in a simulated experience of newspaper reading. He also trusts them to know the terrain well enough to appreciate the reason for the abrupt change of direction: Cowper is writing about a national trauma of loss whose emotional and material geographies spanned the two Indies.<sup>16</sup>

To be clear, the terrain Cowper expects his readers to navigate is not only the field of representational practices: it also includes the grounds of material conditions. The juxtaposition of America and India in the *Morning Chronicle*—or in Cowper’s imagined newspaper of speculative musings—cannot be attributed to unconscious habit alone. The Indies were “conceptually proximate” for eighteenth-century Britons at least in part because they were economically, politically, and institutionally proximate as well. Although the pairing of the two Indies was a matter of habit, routine, and simple common sense, it was not merely floating in the ether of mental life. Rather, this pairing was rooted in material conditions: it existed in the world as well as in the mind. British troops were simultaneously fighting a war in India and the Atlantic when Cowper paired the two in poetic verse. We get a concrete, if ethereal, sense of

this material proximity from the cloud of Indian-grown “opium” smoke that drifts across the Atlantic waters in Cowper’s poem as if it were secondhand smoke from a neighbor close at hand, leaving British troops in America “drugg’d” and sleepy, “snor[ing]” toward defeat. Perhaps opium stands in here for the other East Indian food drug that, in historical fact, poisoned Britain’s presence in America: tea. This global commodity lights up the complex circuitry erected between the two Indies in the years following 1763, when, as already mentioned, a consensus emerged to govern the empire systemically. The disastrous Tea Act of 1773 aimed to stabilize the finances of the East India Company—which were near collapse as a result of the insupportable speculation on its stock that followed its conquests in Bengal during the Seven Years’ War—by turning North American markets into a captive outlet for £17 million-worth of unsold tea. The outcome of this legislation is well known: American colonists expressed their dissatisfaction with Parliament’s systemic imperial bookkeeping by dumping £9,000-worth of tea into Boston Harbor. The empire’s increasingly complex circuitry made it vulnerable to sudden conflagration from an isolated spark.<sup>17</sup>

As we have already begun to see, “mentalités” is best understood as an umbrella term that bundles together a number of discrete but related parts. The study of mentalités entails everything from unconscious habit, to highly speculative thought, to “structures of feeling”—as well as the institutional and material arrangements that subtend all of the above. So far, we have discussed the first and the last of these four components. In the next section I continue to use *The Task* as a base-camp to explore the remaining two, which, I believe, make a retooled version of l’histoire des mentalités especially indispensable for the current moment in eighteenth-century studies.<sup>18</sup>

### Reorienting the Present

Perhaps the most useful critical reorientation entailed by the study of mentalités is not something it does but rather something it declines to do: contrary to popular currents in eighteenth-century studies, l’histoire des mentalités does not disentangle affect from cognitive activity. This is so important because recovering the role of the two Indies in late Geor-

gian theorizations of empire and globalization requires working across and between conceptual structures, on the one hand, and structures of feeling, on the other.

In *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, Kevis Goodman stages an admittedly persuasive case for a clean demarcation between thinking and feeling in the past, arguing that the global-imperial present was *a ectively* accessible but *cognitively* inaccessible to Cowper and his contemporaries. Goodman locates the theoretical basis for her argument in Frederic Jameson's essay "Cognitive Mapping." Here, Jameson argues that imperialism stretched the spatial boundaries of Euro-American social formations, engendering "a growing contradiction between lived experience and structure, or between a phenomenological description of the life of an individual and the more properly structural model of the conditions of existence of that experience." In other words, while lived experience was happening in London, the "structural coordinates" determinative of that experience were located in Bengal, or Jamaica. Jameson argues that this state of affairs was simply too much for historical actors to wrap their heads around: it was "often not even conceptualizable for most people." In *Georgic Modernity*, Goodman builds on this premise. If the present of global imperialism was unconceptualizable for someone like Cowper, then history must be "absent as *idea*" in *The Task*. But it *is* present in a different form, she argues—as "*feeling*."<sup>19</sup>

Goodman's spin on Jameson has exerted an enormous influence over recent readings of *The Task*, particularly "The Winter Evening." Her reading of the poem hinges on two crucial lines that appear at the conclusion of Cowper's survey of the newspaper's "map of busy life" (whose speculative precursor I discussed at the opening of this introduction). At this moment in the poem, Cowper pauses to reflect on the task he has just completed, musing, "'Tis pleasant through the loop-holes of retreat / To peep at such a world" (4.88–89). The newspaper provides "loop-holes of retreat" for Cowper because it is the sensory passageway linking his isolated Olney existence to the outside "world"—and, thus, his present. Yet Cowper's need for such a prosthetic is not due to his retirement alone; it is, rather, the unavoidable result of living in an imperial age. For the "world" here is meant in two senses of the word: Cowper uses the newspaper to "peep" at the "world" of London politics and fashionable



life, as well as the much larger “world” outside the metropole—what he a few lines later calls “the globe.” Busy Londoners would likewise have needed the newspaper’s “loop-holes” to “peep at” the latter “world” in 1784. Even with the newspaper’s help, though, the phenomenological gap between metropolitan experience and global-imperial structure is never adequately closed, according to Goodman. Other scholars have tended to agree. Mary Favret’s poignant reading of *The Task* as a meditation on modern wartime specifics that the poem’s “haunting reminders” of the “larger world of suffering” are “affective rather than intellectual.”<sup>20</sup>

I have taken the time to recapitulate Goodman’s reading because, at the same time that it has revealed important affective dimensions of “the Winter Evening,” it has also kept us from detecting a rich theoretical vein in Cowper’s engagement with his global-imperial present. Tracing that vein leads us straight to the figure of the Indies. A heretofore unrecognized intertext is absolutely crucial for grasping the full scope— affective and cognitive—of Cowper’s remediation of imperial affairs: Abbé Raynal and Denis Diderot’s *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*. The *History of the Two Indies* (as it is often abbreviated in English) represents the late Georgian period’s most important theorization of European imperialism. It is thus highly significant that Cowper engages with it in *The Task* at such length. We already know for certain that Cowper, like so many of his contemporaries, read this extraordinarily popular book with great keenness. Although he was initially resistant to what he thought would be “a History of rising & falling Nabobs,” he soon discovered his error and spent the spring of 1778 reading all five volumes (more than three thousand pages!) aloud to his companion, Mrs. Unwin, in intervals of one hour at a time. He was so engrossed that he confessed in a letter to the friend who had lent him the book: “I have been in continual Fear lest every Post should bring a Summons for the Abbé Raynal, and am glad that I have finish’d him before my Fears were realized.” Six years later, Raynal’s influence had not yet waned. In January 1784, Cowper cites him as the source of his dislike of the East India Company and “all Monopolies.” Perhaps, we might speculate, this reference reflects renewed interest, spurred by the publication of a new expanded English edition of the *History of the Two Indies* in 1783.<sup>21</sup>



In the very lines where Cowper elaborates the experience of peeping at the world through the newspaper, he also pays tribute to—and simulates—Raynal’s “globally telescopic eye.” In fact, the entire stanza following the famous “loop-holes of retreat” line echoes the opening pages of the 1783 edition of the *History of the Two Indies* so distinctly that the parallels can only be deliberate. It is fitting that readers have mistaken Cowper’s paean to Raynal for an homage to an anonymous “news correspondent,” since the *History of the Two Indies* anticipated the role the daily papers would later fill in Cowper’s life. As he explained in 1778: “I am indebted to him [Raynal] for much Information upon Subjects, which, however Interesting, are so remote from those with which Country Folks in general are conversant, that had not his Work reached me at Olney, I should have been forever Ignorant of them.” Just like the London papers would do some years later, Raynal supplemented Cowper’s “conversable world,” bringing “remote” subjects and places into retirement’s reach. “The Winter Evening” reprises these early words of praise:

He travels and expiates, as the bee  
 From flow’r to flow’r, so he from land to land; . . .  
 He sucks intelligence in ev’ry clime,  
 And spreads the honey of his deep research  
 At his return, a rich repast for me (4.107–8, 111–13)

Tellingly, these lines also echo Raynal’s own description of “the alarming task I have imposed upon myself” in compiling the *History of the Two Indies*. On page three of the 1783 edition, he describes calling “in to my assistance men of information from all nations,” living as well as dead. While Raynal leaves the nature of the “information” he gathers unspecified, any reader of the *History of the Two Indies* would recognize Cowper’s concise description as accurate: “The manners, customs, policy of all” (4.109).<sup>22</sup>

Conveniently, all of the material from the *History of the Two Indies* remediated in this stanza of *The Task* comes from the same single paragraph on page three, making the debt easy to trace. More helpful still, Cowper chooses some of the most memorable imagery from the *History of the Two Indies*, wherein Raynal imagines taking a virtual flight above the globe: “Raised above all human considerations” like “hope or fear, . . .



we soar above the atmosphere, and behold the globe beneath us.” Cowper remediates this imagery just as memorably when he describes removing to “a safe distance” from the “world” in order to better “view” it:

us sitting and surveying thus at ease  
 e globe and its concerns, I seem advanced  
 To some secure and more than mortal height (4.93–95)

After he rises to a celestial viewing point, Cowper’s flight continues to mirror that of Raynal. This is interesting, since Raynal takes his reader along with him on his virtual flight, writing in the first-person-plural case and present tense so that the passage in question reads like a guided simulation: “we let fall our tears . . . upon virtue in distress . . . we pour forth imprecations on those who deceive mankind, and those who oppress them and devote them to ignominy.” Just as Raynal instructs, Cowper has an emotional response to what he sees looking down at the globe: “I mourn the pride / And av’rice that make man a wolf to man” (4.102–3). Clearly, Cowper found in the *History of the Two Indies* a template for responding to current events through feeling.<sup>23</sup>

But Cowper also found in the *History of the Two Indies* a sustained, self-conscious attempt to *theorize* the present. The experience the *History* held out to readers was both affective and cognitive, with an emphasis on the latter. From the very first words of its title page, which specify that it is a “*Philosophical*” history, the book’s orientation is explicitly conceptual. Moreover, as Sunil Agnani argues, passages like the one quoted above reflect Diderot’s desire to fashion the kind of “traveling philosophy” called for by Rousseau. In fact, even the emotional journey remediated by Cowper ends in thought rather than feeling. Raynal’s virtual flight is a bid for *critical* as well as emotional distance. He soars into the atmosphere at least partly in order to gain enough perspective to pose questions that are truly global in scope: “It is from thence, in a word, that, viewing those beautiful regions, in which the arts and sciences flourish, and which have been for so long a time obscured by ignorance and barbarism, I have said to myself: Who is it that hath digged these canals? Who is it that hath dried up these plains? Who is it that hath collected, clothed, and civilized these people? When have I heard the voice of all the





enlightened men among them, who have answered: “This is the effect of commerce.” From a distant height, the East and West Indies—which, in Raynal and Diderot’s usage encompass virtually all of the colonized regions of the globe—are brought into visual proximity. Now that the two Indies *look* as close as they already *sound*, Raynal can see new commonalities and systemic connections between them: it is evident that these distant “regions” are linked, in the present, by a shared history of colonial commerce. The intermingling of Raynal and Diderot’s voices in this edition complicates the task of interpreting passages like this one. But whether “commerce” is being lauded for the cities it has founded or condemned for the suffering it has wrought, or a bit of both, the posing and answering of this question nonetheless represents an unmistakable attempt to *think*, on a *cognitive* level, the *idea* of global capitalism.<sup>24</sup>

Over the course of this book it will become evident that Raynal and Diderot’s interest in theorizing the global-imperial present was one that many of their contemporaries in addition to Cowper shared. After all, thousands of Britons purchased and borrowed and read their books. O’Quinn’s argument about the American Crisis holds true for the late Georgian period more generally: Britons, especially Londoners, were eager to “experience the present *critically*.” Moreover, the period’s newspapers, print media, theatrical productions, and visual culture—in short the entirety of its “mediascape”—were all geared toward facilitating such an experience. For Londoners, the experience of experiencing the present critically was quotidian. When Britons reflected critically on the present in the decades after 1763, they understood quite clearly that their everyday experience was being determined by forces located far away from their small North Atlantic island. Indeed, how could they not? It was an unavoidable fact of existence in these years. Late Georgian Britons sought, on an unmistakably cognitive level, to make sense of this complex state of affairs. Why not recover and learn from their theorizing?<sup>25</sup>

### Past-Critical Reading: Close Reading from the Inside Out

The study of mentalités involves viewing past societies from inside their own conceptual frameworks. Given that the topic of this book is imperialism, some might fear that this method carries a risk of contamination.

Let me, then, clarify at the outset that this book is unequivocally anticolonial. Strategically inhabiting the inside of the Indies mentality does not require merging with it or adopting its ethos. To the contrary, I believe that the fear of getting too close to imperialist ideology may in itself pose an obstacle to literary-historical analysis, as knowing something deeply requires sustained intimacy with it. The latter idea is already enshrined at the methodological heart of literary studies, in what we call close reading. What I am advocating here is simply a closer version of close reading: a kind of close reading from the inside out, or what I call *past-critical reading*.

Past-critical reading is, like it sounds, almost post-critical but not quite. While past-critical reading does part ways with what we might call “strong” symptomatic reading—wherein the hero-critic uses his privileged powers of insight to unmask, expose, or rewrite a text—it does not give up on critique entirely. It does not because it cannot: unlike post-critical reading, past-critical reading doesn’t see critique only as the alienable possession of the critic; it also recognizes critique as the inalienable possession of many texts. Many but not all. Past-critical reading doesn’t see literary texts as inherently critical, as *necessarily* enacting critiques whose latent politics merely need to be activated by the handmaid-critic. Nor does past-critical reading seek to artificially “displace” the “conceptual activity” of critique from critic to text via a “strategic rhetorical trope,” an approach advocated by Nathan Hensley under the banner of “curatorial reading.” Past-critical reading’s location of conceptual activity in texts is not accomplished by a sleight of hand. Rather, it results from the simple recognition that people in the past thought *critically* about their present. Past-critical reading aims to harvest the insights of past-critical thinking.<sup>26</sup>

I trace an important theoretical precursor of past-critical reading to a text usually associated with suspicious depth reading, Louis Althusser’s *Reading Capital*. Since Jameson identifies *Reading Capital* as the theoretical basis for his argument in “Cognitive Mapping,” it will be doubly useful to spell out how I read Althusser differently than Jameson does. The central premise of *Reading Capital* is that Karl Marx’s *Capital* needs to be read through the lens of its own theoretical perspective. Unfortunately, Marx never got around to formulating this perspective in

precise, stand-alone terms. Hence, Althusser argues, we must proceed symptomatically: on a first reading we excavate Marx's theoretical perspective (or "problematic") from *Capital*; and then we read *Capital* once again, this time through its own problematic. Jameson's take on *Reading Capital* has exerted a tremendous influence over this text's reception in North American literary studies. However, it is rarely noted how substantially Jameson modifies Althusser's method. Most notably, Jameson's symptomatic reading is not "double." Instead of excavating his "interpretive code" from a first reading, as called for by Althusser, Jameson substitutes a code supplied in advance: the "single vast unfinished plot" of Marxist history, "the history of class struggles." The resulting difference between Althusser and Jameson's methods is vast. Whereas Althusser "reads" a text (hence the title *Reading Capital*), Jameson "rewrites" it. The former approach is (or at least claims to be) minimally invasive, while the latter is maximally interventionist.<sup>27</sup>

All this means that, of the two critics, Althusser brings us closer to the kind of retooled historicist method I am calling past-critical reading. Given Althusser's reputation as the arch nemesis of historicism, this may come as a surprise. But Althusser is in fact highly sensitive to how the limits of the thinkable—or what he calls the "*mode of production of knowledges*"—shift over time, a process-event he refers to alternately as a "*change of terrain*" and a "transformation of the problematic." Such changes do not take place in a theory vacuum. Although Althusser's break with empiricism leads him to grant a semi-autonomy to knowledge production—meaning that knowledge is not simply, in Hall's words, "an empiricist reflection of the real in thought"—his "*mode of production of knowledges*" is nonetheless articulated to "the real world of a given historical society." It is constituted through a complex combination of "material," "mental," and societal ("economic, political and ideological") conditions. Put another way, a society's "*apparatus of thought*" is "a material as well as a 'mental' system, whose practice is founded on and articulated to the existing economic, political and ideological practices which directly or indirectly provide it with essentials of its 'raw materials.'"<sup>28</sup>

*Apparatus of thought . . . Appareil des pensées.* If this phrase has induced a mild spell of déjà vu it is probably because it echoes many of the keywords associated with the study of mentalités, most obviously

Bloch's *appareil conceptuel*. It takes only a little stretch of the imagination to see that what Althusser is describing in this passage is something very much like the study of mentalités, albeit transposed into a structuralist Marxist idiom. Althusser's kinship with the Annales School was no secret: out of only a handful of scholars mentioned by name in the text of *Reading Capital*, three are Annalists. At some level, Althusser shared an intellectual project with them. They two fought a common enemy (positivist history) and worked toward a common goal: the systematic understanding of a whole society (Althusser's "mode of production" and the Annalists' "total history"). Most importantly, both sought to supplant the history of ideas with a much more subtle and far-reaching study of how societies constrain and structure what is conceptualizable as thought in a given historical moment. What is Althusser's double reading if not a philosopher's version of inhabiting past mentalités? Why did Paré see armor where we see a comet? Why did Cowper see the Indies whereas we do not? In both cases, the answer has nothing to do with the myopia or farsightedness of what Althusser calls "any given thinking subject." Rather, what we have here is a collective phenomenon: the angles of vision alternately enabled or foreclosed by a given mentalité. Just as Althusser analyzes *Capital* from the inside of its own theoretical problematic, so the study of mentalités seeks to view past societies from the inside of their own mental frameworks.<sup>29</sup>

*The Global Indies* relearns the cultural landscape of eighteenth-century British imperialism by bringing the period's own conceptual apparatus to bear on it. While I hope this approach offers something new, it also takes inspiration from the cohort of mid-century literary scholars and historians known as the "British Marxists," sometimes referred to as the "British counterpart of the *Annales* group." Scholars like Raymond Williams, Eric Hobsbawm, and E. P. Thompson never regarded critique of even the highest order as the sole domain of the critic. Instead they insisted that the literature, thought, and social practices of the eighteenth century's laboring poor deserved to be taken seriously. They all sought, each in his own way, to recover the insights of historical subjects whose ability to reflect cognitively on their present had been denied by mainstream history. They sought, in Hobsbawm's words, "to restore to men of the past, and especially the poor of the past, the gift of theory."

My reading of “The Winter Evening” shares this motivation: I have sought to “restore” to Cowper the “gift” of theorizing his present—a task I complete in the next section.<sup>30</sup>

### The Shape of the Global Eighteenth Century

Sometimes scholars working in the global eighteenth century treat this subfield’s object of analysis (“the global”) as something that is only visible in hindsight. One premise of this book is that eighteenth-century people were more preoccupied with theorizing global processes than we often tend to think; and I propose to use past-critical reading to recover and learn from this theorizing. In the past two decades the “global eighteenth century” has come to occupy a central place in the field of eighteenth-century studies, thanks to the work of Srinivas Aravamudan, Laura Brown, Catherine Hall, Suvir Kaul, Felicity Nussbaum, Roxann Wheeler, Kathleen Wilson, Chi-ming Yang, and many other scholars.

The modeling of imperial and global space has also been amply treated in the wider field of British imperial history, where “south-south” connections between colonies have begun to garner as much attention as links between individual colonies and the metropole. This book would be unimaginable in the absence of Tony Ballantyne’s work on the “webs of empire” or Alan Lester’s “networked” model of imperial connections. To diffract the premise of this book through their terms, “the Indies” is shorthand for one particularly well-traveled web, or network, that linked the two most important colonies in Britain’s empire.<sup>31</sup>

While I deeply admire all of the discussed work, I believe it might be improved by a more serious engagement with historical conceptualizations of global space. In today’s terms we might name the subject of the *History of the Two Indies* as European imperialism, or global capitalism, or the modern world system. But Raynal and Diderot did not write in our terms, they wrote in theirs—so they wrote about the Indies. We should not mistake their lack of a modern theoretical vocabulary for an absence of serious theorizing. Although the figure of the Indies was already nearly three hundred years old, Raynal and Diderot turned it into a keyword by using it in a new way: as an analytic instrument for bringing geographically distant colonized regions into critical proximity. Take,

for example, the very first sentence of the *History*: “No event has been so interesting to mankind in general, and to the inhabitants of Europe in particular, as the discovery of the New World, and the passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope.” At first glance, this sentence appears to be a descriptive statement of fact. But an unstated theoretical problematic animates it. What might appear to be a minor grammatical error is in fact a major critical intervention. By referring to two distinct voyages (Christopher Columbus’s expedition in 1492 and Vasco de Gama’s in 1497) in the singular, as one “event,” this sentence effectuates a radical perspectival shift, insisting that the history of the two Indies constitutes a single history: the history of global capitalism and European imperialism. The result is nothing less than a change of terrain. For Raynal and Diderot, the two Indies is much more than just a convenient shorthand. Like any good keyword, it performs crucial conceptual work, becoming the condition of possibility for a global, systemic critique of European imperialism.<sup>32</sup>

More than two decades ago, in *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy suggested that “cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective.” Building on Gilroy’s approach, as well as Lewis and Wigen’s call for “a *creative cartographic vision* capable of effectively grasping unconventional regional forms,” *The Global Indies* fashions a new “explicitly transnational” “complex unit of analysis”: the Indies. In choosing to build a new analytic unit out of old recycled parts, I stress the importance of relearning the eighteenth century’s own critical vocabulary for global imperialism. Only by so doing can we appreciate the extent to which global thinking saturates the period’s literature.<sup>33</sup>

Take, for example, Cowper’s pairing of “th’ Atlantic wave” and “India” in the lines quoted at the outset of this introduction. It is still true, as I have argued, that this pairing reproduces an itinerary that by 1785 had become routine. But it is no less true that these lines represent an adept redeployment by Cowper of a cutting-edge conceptualization of global imperialism, which he imbibed from the *History of the Two Indies*. In pairing “th’ Atlantic wave” and “India” in his imagined newspaper of speculative musings, Cowper prompts his reader to view current events

unfolding at opposite ends of the empire as connected to one another. We might even say that he subtly teaches his readers to adopt a systemic perspective on Britain's global empire. Put another way, he prompts them to "peep" at the "world" through the lens of the Indies mentality. *The Global Indies* reactivates this way of looking in order to relearn the cultural history of British imperialism from a more historically attuned global perspective. Key discourses and conjunctures—from race and class to the Age of Revolutions—look fundamentally different when viewed from the capacious perspective of the Indies mentality.

### The Plan of This Book

The chapters that follow are organized thematically, but they also proceed in chronological order, telling a diachronic story about changes in the culture of British imperialism between the Seven Years' and Napoleonic Wars. The story begins in the Prelude, where I set the scene for the chapters that follow. Here, I try to capture the major cultural fallout of the Seven Years' War. In addition to radically disrupting the nation's socioeconomic status quo and altering the texture of metropolitan sociability, the war inaugurated a new way of seeing the empire: the Indies mentality.

Chapter 1 contributes to the ongoing scholarly reassessment of the so-called American Crisis, which I argue was actually experienced—and in many ways is still best understood—as a global crisis in imperial affairs. While the chapter discusses Edmund Burke's speech "On American Taxation" and Frances Burney's debut novel *Evelina*, its primary case study is Samuel Foote's neglected comic masterpiece *The Cozeners*. One of my goals in Chapter 1 is to show how the theater afforded playwrights especially complex representational practices with which to render the far-flung coordinates of Britain's globally stretched imperial social formation visible. At the theater, Londoners learned how to view the empire from the perspective of the Indies mentality; and they sought to make sense of current events within this global analytic framework.

In Chapter 2, I use the Indies mentality to relearn British racial discourse, which I argue formed in circulation between colonial India and the colonial Atlantic world. After exploring British drama's repertoire of



racial character, I turn to the chapter's primary case study: Julius Soubise. Often overlooked by scholars today, during his own lifetime Soubise's celebrity rivaled that of his better remembered Afro-British contemporaries, Olaudah Equiano and Ignatius Sancho. Like Equiano's, whose travels took him to Turkey and the North Pole, Soubise's "life geography" overflowed the borders of the Black Atlantic: born in Saint Kitts, he grew up in London and spent the last two decades of his life in Calcutta. In the first half of Chapter 2, I attend to his time in London, where, I argue, he catalyzed tropologies of Eastern royalty in order to fashion himself as a "Black Prince," thereby carving out a racialized but still exalted place for himself in the beau monde. In the chapter's second half, I follow Soubise to Calcutta, tracing how his racial self presentation altered in his journey from metropole to colony, from the circum-Atlantic to India. While British ideas about race certainly traveled from the former to the latter, India's colonial racial formation was also shaped by Mughal precedents. Indeed, aspects of the subcontinent's Indo-Persian racial formation even migrated westward through imperial networks, influencing the evolution of racial ideologies in the British Atlantic world.

Chapter 3 builds on the critique of the Atlantic world paradigm initiated in Chapters 1 and 2. The chapter opens in Haiti, where, I show, revolutionary leaders like Jean-Jacques Dessalines opposed not only chattel slavery but also "political slavery," or subjection to the absolute rule of a foreign conqueror—namely, colonialism. From classical antiquity through the Age of Revolutions, political slavery was associated with Asia and Oriental despotism. This helps explain why eighteenth-century writers ubiquitously associated slavery with India even while they denied that actual chattel slavery was practiced there. The chapter traces the circuit of political slavery and Oriental despotism's global travels, around the world and in the "world" of metropolitan print. Picking up in the 1770s and ending in the 1790s, the chapter functions as a hinge between the post-Seven Years' War moment explored in Chapters 1 and 2, and the postrevolutionary, turn-of-the-nineteenth-century settings of Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4 explores a contradiction at the heart of the mainstream abolitionist movement: colonialism in India was promoted as a solution to the problem of slavery. In her seminal study of nineteenth-century





US literature, *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman insists that we attend to forms of unfreedom that persisted across the *temporal* divide between slavery and emancipation. Building on Hartman, Chapter 4 focuses on forms of unfreedom that trouble the *geographical* divide drawn in abolitionist discourse between slavery and freedom *within* the British empire. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of Marianna Starke's pro-imperialism / antislavery drama (set in India), *The Sword of Peace*. Next, I turn to Maria Edgeworth's anti-Jacobin short-story collection *Popular Tales*, which features nearly identical scenes of slavery set in Jamaica and India. Edgeworth's fiction might seem worlds away from actual colonial policy; but by contextualizing her writing amid debates about the slave trade and proposals for the cultivation of sugar in Bengal, I show that her stories were important and highly regarded thought experiments in colonial governance. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of an important historical instantiation of the Indies mentality that falls outside the time frame of this study: the transportation of Indian indentured laborers to the Caribbean in the 1830s.

Chapter 5 explores one way in which the Indies mentality was reproduced at an institutional level: through the practice of rotating officials between postings in India and the Americas. A case study in colonial lives—which have become a crucial hermeneutic for imperial history in recent years—the chapter focuses on Maria Nugent, whose diaries and letters record her time in Jamaica and India, where her husband was governor and commander in chief, respectively. Though a woman's diaries might seem to offer only a limited perspective on imperial institutions, I argue that what Lady Nugent calls “the business of society” actually represents a crucial—but largely overlooked—arena of colonial governance. By painting a portrait of empire whose backdrop is a ballroom instead of a boardroom, I try to restore British women to the stories we tell about imperial rule.

In the Prelude and Chapters 1, 2, and 3, I spend what may seem like a surprising amount of time in what Hannah Greig shorthands “the beau monde.” This reflects my belief that empire was pervasively present in London's fashionable world to an extent that does not always register in scholarship. Building on the work of Gillian Russell and Daniel O'Quinn, I argue that the history of sociability and the history of empire

need to be written together. Race, for example, played an underappreciated role in the making of elite class identities—even for Britons who never stepped foot in the empire. In Chapters 1, 2, and 3 in particular, I try to excavate the aristocracy’s buried role in the making of the British empire. By the turn of the nineteenth century, I argue, the Indies had become a key site for the reproduction of the nation’s ruling elite.<sup>34</sup>

What are the historical and methodological limits of the Indies mentality? In the Coda, I jump forward in time to 1870 in order to witness the moment in time when the two Indies ceased to be thought together. I locate the swansong of the Indies mentality at the completion of the first US transcontinental railroad to the Pacific, which was widely hailed as an American “Passage to India.” Next, I make a case for the portability of my method, especially in the context of postcolonial studies, where I hope it can be used to reconstruct and reinhabit non-European epistemologies.

While this book brings together the literary and cultural histories of Britain’s Atlantic and South Asian colonies, my approach is not additive. The goal of this study is not, in other words, to combine everything we already know about India with everything we already know about the Atlantic world. Instead of merely trying to augment our knowledge in this way, my aim is to shake up this knowledge’s epistemological basis. I do this by working with a different object of knowledge: the Indies. One inevitable consequence of this approach is that the particularities of individual colonial histories are emphasized less than they tend to be in other studies. This sacrifice is, I believe, worth making. We already have countless studies detailing the singularities of South Asian and American colonial histories. What we lack is an account of how the fusion of the two Indies into a single object of knowledge shaped the culture of British imperialism, which, in turn, changed the shape of the world.

# Notes

## Introduction

1. St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, 207; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 162; Baird and Ryskamp, *The Poems of William Cowper*, 113. According to St. Clair, Cowper was “the most commonly read poet of the romantic period” and “probably the most popular and most read modern poet that had ever lived.”

2. Some scholars have already begun to explore this pairing. See Warner, “What’s Colonial about Colonial America?”; Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*; Aravamudan, “East Indies and West Indies”; Stern, “British Asia and British Atlantic”; Stern, “Neither East nor West”; Harris, *Indography*; Nussbaum, “Between ‘Oriental’ and ‘Blacks So Called’”; Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly*; Eacott, *Selling Empire*; Cohen, “The Global Indies.”

3. Krishnan, *Reading the Global*, 1; Ramachandran, *The Worldmakers*, 5–7; Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 9; Shakespeare, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1.3.64–66; *OED Online*, s.v. “Indies, n.” <https://www-oed-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/view/Entry/94445?rskey=fmypo0&result=2> (accessed July 16, 2019); Harris, *Indography*, 2. Beckert suggests that cotton was an underappreciated motive for Columbus’s voyage and a source of his confusion, as he found the plant being cultivated in the Caribbean.

4. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 121–27; Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, 5.

5. Koehn, *The Power of Commerce*, 205–6.

6. Burguière, *The Annales School*, 4, 13–51; Burke, *The French Historical Revolution*, 6–31; Clark, *The Annales School*, 4:3–262; Hall, “Signification, Representation, Ideology,” 91.

7. Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, “À nos lecteurs,” *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale*, no. 1 (15 janvier 1929): 1, 2, quoted in Wallerstein, “*Annales* as Resistance,” 6.

8. Quoted in Vovelle, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, 5; Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, 107. Given its importance, the term *mentalités* is surprisingly difficult to define, for several reasons. First, it is more impressionistic than theoretically precise; second, it is an umbrella term for several distinct but related concepts; third, its meaning and application have evolved significantly over time; and fourth, Annalists have tended to avoid stand-alone theorizing. My understanding of *l'histoire des mentalités* is particularly indebted to Burguière, who offers a useful synthesis of different approaches. See also le Goff, "Mentalities," 81; Birnbaum, "The *Annales* School and Social Theory," 237; Burguière, *The Annales School*, 52–78, 219–42; Duby, "L'histoire des mentalités"; Mandrou, "L'histoire des mentalités"; Airès, "L'histoire des mentalités"; Hutton, "The History of Mentalities"; Burke, "Strengths and Weaknesses of the History of Mentalities"; Chartier, "Intellectual History and the History of Mentalités"; Burke, "Reflections on the Historical Revolution in France"; Hunt, "French History in the Last Twenty Years"; Furet, "Beyond the Annales"; Gismondi, "The Gift of Theory."

9. Martin and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, ix, xi; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*, 36; Massey, *For Space*, 84, 88.

10. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 46, 26, 114, 88; Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology," 97–100; Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 72. Once again, I take this challenge to be central to Marx's project too. See, especially, "The German Ideology," 164–65; and the 1857 "Introduction" to the *Grundrisse*, esp. 100–105.

11. Quoted in Burguière, "The Fate of the History of *Mentalités* in the *Annales*," 410; Burguière, *The Annales School*, 59. In his candidacy statement for the Collège de France, Bloch wrote: the "interpretation of the facts of social organization *from the inside* will be the principle of my teaching, just as it is of my own work."

12. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 46, 49, 88, 149. On literature's world-making capacities, see Kareem, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*; Goldberg, Newman, and Frank, *This Distracted Globe*; Joseph, "Worlding and Unworlding in the Long Eighteenth Century"; Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*.

13. My attempt to lift Cowper's worldview from *The Task* is indebted to Kaul, *Poems of Nation*, 233–52.

14. Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology," 105; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 25–37. For Cowper's newspaper habits, see Baird and Ryskamp, *The Poems of William Cowper*, 379–84; Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, 68; Ellison, "News, Blues, and Cowper's Busy World."

15. Andrew, *Aristocratic Vice*, 37–41; Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, 72–77; O'Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis*, 5–16, 22–23.

16. Baird and Ryskamp, *The Poems of William Cowper*, 381. By October, the fighting had long since ceased in New York, but, due to the slow speed of communication in both directions between Europe and India, hostilities were ongoing in Pondicherry until May and were being reported in London newspapers until November.

17. Kramnick, *Paper Minds*, 93. In *The Task*, Cowper conjures "a world that feels within reach."

18. Williams's "structures of feeling" is heavily indebted to Lucien Goldmann's concept of "genetic structures," which was in turn deeply indebted to l'histoire des mentalités. Taken together, Williams's chapters on "Hegemony," "Structures of Feeling," and "Ideology" in *Marxism and Literature* treat the three dimensions covered by the study of mentalities: unconscious belief, affect, and reflective thought. If "structures of feeling" is taken apart from these other concepts—as it often is in new work on affect studies—then the full scope of Williams's vision is curtailed.

19. Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," 349; Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, 8–9, 90–96.

20. Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, 69; Favret, *War at a Distance*, 24; Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, 237. A notable exception is Kaul, who writes of *The Task*: "In pointing to those moments in 'The Sofa' in which a poetic exercise on mundane, everyday themes and objects ('I sing the SOFA') inevitably turns into an exploration of the wide world of exploration and empire, I wish to suggest the ineluctable redefinition of the 'everyday' by the latter."

21. Cowper, *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, 1:269, 279; 2:194. For more on *The History of the Two Indies*, including its reception in England, see Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly*, 3, 12–15, 25–26, 198; Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, 401. Although the *Histoire* was a collaboration between Raynal and Denis Diderot, the latter's participation was unbeknownst to many contemporary readers, including, it seems, Cowper. I thus refer to the author of the *Histoire* as Raynal.

22. Goodman, *Georgic Modernity*, 69, 81, 91; Cowper, *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, 1:279; Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 170–83; Raynal, *A philosophical and political history*, 1:3. The "globally telescopic eye" is Goodman's term.

23. While scholars have sifted out traces of Fielding and Lucretius in this stanza, the more substantial debt to the *History of the Two Indies* has gone unnoticed. Raynal may also reference Lucretius in the passage Cowper remediates. Compare: "For time changes the nature of the whole world, / and one state of things must pass into another, / and nothing remains as it was: all things move, / all are changed by nature and compelled to alter" to "Every thing has changed, and must change again." Lucretius quoted in Ramachandran, *Worldmakers*, 99; Raynal, *A philosophical and political history*, 1:2–3; Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, 86, 91.

24. Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly*, 42–45, 25; Raynal, *A philosophical and political history*, 1:4. Agnani explains: "Diderot's involvement in the three editions increased with each publication, and he was said to have thoroughly rewritten the third edition by spending as much as fourteen hours a day at the task."

25. O'Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis*, 20, 3. Emphasis added.

26. Criticism on the post-critical is burgeoning quickly. For touchstones and overviews, see Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading"; Hensley, "Curatorial Reading and Endless War," 64; Felski, *The Limits of Critique*; Anker and Felski, *Critique and Post Critique*.

27. Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 16–20; Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 60, 20, 75. For another sympathetic reevaluation of Althusser along similar lines, see Rooney, “Symptomatic Reading is a Problem of Form.”

28. Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 42; Hall, “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” 39. For convergences and divergences between Althusser, Marxism, and the *Annales* see Schöttler, “Althusser and Annales Historiography,” 87–88; Vilar, “Marxist History”; and Birnbaum, “The *Annales* School and Social Theory,” 233; Revel, “The *Annales*,” 16; Eley, *A Crooked Line*, 36; Stoianovich, *French Historical Method*, 111; Braudel, “En guise de conclusion,” 243–61.

29. Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 26, 42, 243, 248. The three are “Lucien Febvre, Labrousse, Braudel.” Althusser calls them the day’s “best historians,” a compliment that some read as backhanded but I do not. For Althusser’s reception among historians and the New Left, see Montag, *Althusser and His Contemporaries*, 15–35, 2; Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory*; Johnson, “Edward Thompson”; Jones, “History and Theory”; Vilar, “Marxist History”; Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain*, 219–45; Anderson, *Arguments Within English Marxism*.

There are also echoes of Bloch’s *Appareil des pensées* in Foucault’s notion of an episteme. Many *Annalistes* believe Foucault appropriated and simplified l’histoire des mentalités by analyzing purely mental, dematerialized, universes—especially in his later work, which focuses on prescriptive texts. Foucault also offers correctives: his emphasis on “rupture” responds to an overemphasis on continuity in l’histoire des mentalités. Burguière, *The Annales School*, 62, 153, 195–218; Burke, *The French Historical Revolution*, 131.

30. Hobsbawm, “British History and the *Annales*,” 179–81, 183, 185; Birnbaum, “The *Annales* School and Social Theory,” 226; Eley, *A Crooked Line*, 40, 56–57; Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory*, 26; Tilly, “Anthropology, History, and the *Annales*,” 210. Hobsbawm argued that the British Marxists represented a “home-grown tradition” of “a history of mentalities”—a tradition which, while distinctly English, was also nurtured by decades of “direct influence,” and indirect “confluence,” and intermittent exchange with the *Annales* movement. Thompson refers to Bloch as a “formidable practitioner of historical materialism.” The first issue of *Past and Present* references *Annales*.

31. For two foundational collections see Nussbaum, *The Global Eighteenth Century*, and Wilson, *A New Imperial History*. For an overview of trends in mapping imperial space, see Lester, “Imperial Circuits and Networks”; Ballantyne, “Race and Webs of Empire.”

32. Raynal, *A philosophical and political history*, 1:1. This passage is echoed by Adam Smith in the *Wealth of Nations* (626), albeit without the singular declension. My approach to reading seemingly straightforward empiricist passages as moments of speculative theorizing is indebted to Kazanjian, *The Brink of Freedom*, 10–31; Kazanjian, “Hegel, Liberia.”

33. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 15; Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, 200.

34. Greig, *The Beau Monde*; Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London*; Russell, “An ‘Entertainment of Oddities’”; Russell and Tuite, *Romantic Sociability*, 20; O’Quinn, *Staging Governance*; O’Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis*.