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Edited by Nicholas Thomas and Diane Losche
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Introduction

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This book arises from a fertile intersection of three trends in the humanities. The first is a new engagement with visual representation, the second is a critical re-appraisal of colonial history, and the third is a sense that inquiry – and particularly historical inquiry – is not a hermetic scholarly effort but something inevitably connected with contention around culture and politics in the present. This book has a tale to tell about colonialism and culture, and specifically about the content and the limits of colonial exchange in a particular region. Much of its analysis proceeds through reflection upon visual sources, and much of its argument is animated by a sense of the power of the past in the present.

Since the mid-twentieth century visual media have assumed increasing significance in everyday life throughout the world and visual culture has become increasingly central in many fields of the humanities. Anthropologists, once preoccupied with linguistic communication and sign systems, are now attempting to address visual, material, and embodied dimensions of social life. Literary scholars have become interested in the prints bound into books, and in the continuities and discontinuities between novels and poems and paintings and engravings. To an even greater extent, the endeavour of cultural history seems pervaded by a contagious enthusiasm for the suggestive intricacies of visual images. Maps that were once the province of historians of maritime exploration, botanical plates regarded as trivial by art historians and emblematic frontispieces that formerly delighted only antiquarian bibliophiles, together with diagrams of machinery, cheap engravings, satirical prints, and postcards, have ceased to be mere illustrations. They are all now being recognised as revelatory materials that sometimes enhance the textual record but that can also communicate differently and discordantly.

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Double Vision takes as its departure point a largely unrecognized work that pioneered this visually astute cultural history. Entitled *European vision and the South Pacific*,[1] it was written by Bernard Smith, and first published in 1960. Trained as an art historian by Ernst Gombrich and others, Smith is the author of art historical studies such as *Place, taste and tradition* (1945) and *Australian painting* (1962).[2] *European vision*, however, is a different kind of book altogether. It was concerned to chart European perceptions of the Pacific, and particularly the ways in which knowing and perceiving conditioned each other over time. It drew upon an extraordinary range of sketches, scientific illustrations, engravings and paintings as well as an equally remarkable array of textual sources. Much of this material has become familiar to us since 1960, but it was then dispersed in many archives and obscure publications. In the book Smith discovered for his readers an extraordinary range of records and fictions of discovery, but he also contextualized these sources in powerful arguments concerning the impact of exotic regions on European art and science. The work incorporated close interpretations of oil paintings once exhibited at the Royal Academy – especially those of William Hodges, the official artist of Cook's second voyage, whom we know as a major British artist primarily as a result of Smith's work – but that is about the extent of its affinity with conventional art history. Bernard Smith assimilated the strengths of that discipline, such as minute attention to specificities of style and technique, and a deep awareness of the array of classical and renaissance conventions, then drew them into a wider inquiry primarily concerned not with individual creativity but with a historically situated process of communication.

European vision was, moreover, a path-breaking work for its sustained attention to the question of the representation of non-European peoples and of cultural difference. Although other books, such as Philip Curtin's *The image of Africa* (1964),[3] examined broadly similar questions, none did so with Smith's subtlety, nor did any bring visual and textual sources into dialogue in a comparable way. *European vision* can be seen to have been published twenty years too early, having been more widely appreciated by general readers than by scholars until Edward Said's *Orientalism*[4] appeared in 1978, stimulating what was to become a pervasive interest in topics such as Orientalism, primitivism, colonial culture and the representation of otherness.

Though rightly regarded as a politically courageous book and as a foundational critique, *Orientalism* carried flaws that came to be accentuated in subsequent 'postcolonial' writing. It has become increasingly evident – indeed, it is something of a cliché in current commentary – that the present range of approaches exaggerates and reinscribes precisely those western hegemonies that they wishfully challenge.[5] Euro–American critics have diminished their own traditions and histories, reducing arguably interesting writers and artists, from Herodotus to Gauguin and beyond, to retailers of exoticist and racist stereotypes, without in any obvious way thereby empowering or even acknowledging the autonomous complexity of non-European cultures. The tendency is to insist upon the will to dominate in imperial culture, science and vision,

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without investigating the ways in which the apparatuses of colonialism and modernity have been compromised locally. Rather than explore the plurality of distinct histories on the margins of colonialism and indeed beyond it, the tendency is to reintroduce a notion of the inscrutability of the other, as an unknowable alterity beyond discourse. If, however, indigenous traditions are alluded to but not discussed and engaged with, the most generalized and stereotypic images of tribal art and culture are likely to be sustained. Art-world discourse, in particular, often characterizes indigenous cultures through generic values of spirituality and attachment to place; it should not be denied that land and ancestral attachments are profoundly important, but the affirmative evocation of these aspects of indigenous tradition too often obscures the distinctiveness of indigenous Australian and Oceanic cultures.

This collection insists on the specific complexity of indigenous art traditions by discussing aesthetic categories among the Abelam people of the Sepik River region in Papua New Guinea and the powerful presence of Maori art in Aotearoa New Zealand. By including chapters devoted to these art traditions we have perhaps introduced an incoherence, introduced topics radically different from those covered in other chapters dealing with the culture of voyagers and settler artists. But our point is that this incoherence indeed constitutes the cultural history of the region.

If the postcolonial endeavour has somehow fetishized the very obstacles to cultural dialogue and exchange that it aimed to dismantle, the imagination and intricacy of *European vision* provides a good place to start, if those with a stake in these issues are to work toward a renewed sense of the richness of European and indigenous visions, and to explore both the content and the limits of the exchange that has linked them.

The difference between the title of this volume and the title of Bernard Smith's, however, marks the sense in which this book is not a homage to Smith's work but rather a departure from it. *European vision* addressed one side of the colonial encounter; writing nearly forty years later, we can only struggle to engage both.[6] The fact that Smith's book said little about the indigenous dimensions of a process of cross-cultural perception arose not from a personal intellectual limitation but rather from much wider conditions of humanities research. Art history addressed European art; anthropologists studied native peoples; relatively few people studied 'primitive art' at all, but those who did focused on unambiguously 'primitive' objects, often those associated with cult activities in tribal Melanesian, African, and Australian societies. Although there were exciting developments in the anthropology of art in the 1960s and 70s, scholars in the field probably would have been perplexed had it been suggested then that there might be an area of overlap between colonial history and the anthropology of art. Through research in a host of fields – including colonial anthropology, collecting, exhibitions, artistic primitivism, and indigenous responses to colonialism – a zone of exchange, if not convergence, has formed. Debate has been fuelled not merely by an academic rethinking of these disciplines but also by the practice of art itself.

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Just as painters such as William Hodges offered a visual commentary on cross-cultural relations – as well as upon many other issues, subsequent artists have addressed questions of colonialism and cultural difference in the Pacific and Australia. The deliberately postcolonial art of the present, which this volume addresses in its conclusion, is defined by the critical re-appraisal of colonial art and iconography. It is a project that has obvious affinities with scholarly critiques of the kind exemplified in this book. In Australia and New Zealand, the *historical* orientation of much contemporary art is quite arresting compared with the art movements of the 1960s and 70s. There are, of course, basic differences between the ways in which artists and scholars re-use and represent the cultures of the past for the present, but the point of affinity nevertheless suggests a novel relationship between art and academic writing – one that is appropriate to the visual turn in the humanities that has already been mentioned. Art works need not be taken as objects of analysis, as sources to be interpreted. Rather, they can be seen as interpretations *in their own right* of the issues that preoccupy cultural historians and invite comparison with texts of various kinds. Anthropologists have long sought to represent the so-called native point of view, or at least have deployed this notoriously problematic claim rhetorically. An anthropology engaged with contemporary art could give this claim new credibility, in the sense that artists are presented not as informants but as co-interpreters of the issues that preoccupy anthropologists and cultural historians.

'Double vision' might suggest the balance between European and indigenous visions that was lacking in Smith's book; but the term also implies disorientation, and this is appropriate, although this book does not intend to mimic through literary experimentation the cultural confusion it describes. Cross-cultural histories require a dislocated vision because they are not, in fact, unitary histories at all. A unitary history is a shared theatre of action and meaning, and it can be seen in two or more ways: the history of a strike can, for instance, be told from either the bosses' or the workers' point of view. Similarly, there are passages in colonial histories that are understood in different ways by the colonizing and the indigenous parties – as they are also, of course, perceived differently by groups within those parties, such as men and women. But colonialism in the Pacific and Australia over the last two centuries does not constitute a shared theatre of action and meaning, like an industrial struggle, that is merely perceived in different ways. Just as indigenous art is constituted in different ways to European art, indigenous historical consciousness is not necessarily defined around the same events or chronologies as European narrative. It may occupy a different ground altogether.

While this book aims to complement an account of European imaginings in Oceania with an acknowledgement of indigenous imaginings, it does not anticipate that these will be symmetrically lined up in any sense. There is not necessarily an indigenous vision that can be juxtaposed with European vision. There are, of course, many indigenous visions, and many European

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perceptions, but we are not only concerned to point to plurality. It is more important to acknowledge that, over some phases of the cross-cultural encounter in this region, there was, in fact, no encounter. That is, European and indigenous imaginings of place, self, sociality and otherness were effectively autonomous, they were introspective, they were not caught up in dialogue, they mobilized what we call 'the other' largely for their existing imaginative purposes. Non-encounters of this kind may be most conspicuous in early phases of colonial histories, during which contacts may be fleeting and discontinuous. But, over the longer term, the extent to which parties to an encounter grasp or partake of each other's values is variable, and often surprisingly limited. For all his exposure to Maori, C. F. Goldie, whose work is focused upon in Chapter 6, remains a profoundly European artist, while the carvers and painters discussed in Chapter 7, for all their engagement with European media and art-world institutions, do not cease to be Maori. It is this combination of connection and separateness that requires a double vision, rather than a paradigm that presumes one thing or the other.

Cross-cultural studies must therefore engage not only with the content of relationships and transactions but also with their limits. If the departure point for much research in recent decades has been the question of the ramifications of colonialism – or globalization – it is vital that this not define the end point through exaggeration of those ramifications. We address colonial encounters and colonial exchange without presuming that the effects of these meetings and transactions were pervasive. Hence this book attempts to empower indigenous cultures, in an analytical sense, not only by addressing the resistance of counter-colonial art, but also by acknowledging the spaces beyond colonial culture, in which cultural forms and values have never been prescribed by a dominant colonizing culture. These 'spaces beyond' are those occupied by Maori, and most arrestingly, by Abelam; the incommensurability between the chapters that address these peoples and those constituting the remainder of the book underlines the profundity of cultural differences that precede, and may be refracted, by the disorder of colonial history.

Before charting in greater detail the cross-cultural tale that this book seeks to tell, it is important to note that there is another kind of double vision that animates a number of chapters here. Work focused on the profound differences between the colonizers and the colonized, between European and Oceanic peoples, has all too often suppressed the differences at play within each side. Here we reject the tendency to homogenize either the 'west' or indigenous cultures as entities themselves devoid of contention and complexity. This is perhaps to restate a comment often made on the work of Edward Said, that the critique of Orientalism evoked an equally problematic Occidentalism. The point is not, however, introduced here in order to join some backlash against the critique of colonialism, but rather to underline the sense in which we are concerned to move in a more productive direction, by keeping in view both the profound differences between European and indigenous cultures, and the complexities of practice and discourse within each.

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This book presupposes, but does not aim to analyze explicitly, a reorientation of the disciplines that are drawn upon here: art history, anthropology, cultural history, and Pacific studies. All of these terms mask a multitude of positions, and we do not want to parade caricatures by invoking supposedly orthodox perspectives that we see ourselves as departing from. It hardly needs to be stated that we are committed more to a history of visual culture than an art history; that this history is not a unitary, linear, history on a western model but in fact a plurality of histories, some shaped by understandings of time and place that do not look 'historical' at all; and that our anthropology acknowledges the strength of cultural differences without presuming their fixity. It may be worth adding that we aim to draw disciplines into a common frame of debate, but do not presume that their distinct groundings will be, or should be, effaced in some kind of encompassing interdisciplinarity. Particular methods and procedures, such as ethnographic field work and research in visual archives, do generate perspectival differences that should be recognized and employed rather than suppressed in debate. If the cultures we are studying are mutually engaged, and in flux, yet nevertheless profoundly different, Chapter 8 suggests that this may be true, too, of the disciplines that enable us to recognize this paradoxical condition of distinctness and connectedness.

The idea that colonial representation and vision constituted a confident and authoritative truth of the non-western world is disposed of from the outset in this book by Jonathan Lamb's Chapter 1 account of the pretences that circulated around Juan Fernandez. This essay complements Bernard Smith's *European vision* and the other chapters in this volume by dealing with an earlier phase in the maritime history and cultural history of the Pacific. While Captain James Cook's voyages are well known to scholars and to a wider public, those of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century buccaneers are not, even though Woodes Rogers' *A cruising voyage round the world* (1712) provided the raw material for one of the most famous of all voyage-related novels, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe.* Lamb's analysis is perforce concerned with textual rather than visual sources, the latter being negligible for these voyages, but makes points of basic importance for the chapters that follow.

The islands of Juan Fernandez contrast with those more frequently visited by late eighteenth and nineteenth century mariners in being uninhabited. Thus they suggest the ways in which the 'South Sea' was a site not for juxtapositions between self and other but for a play between fantasy and reality, between utopia and actuality, that expressed and exemplified profound tensions in European political thought. Shipwrecks, mutinies, failures and fancies disguise the gestures of absolutism – most extraordinarily in the case of George Shelvocke, whose management of the utopian republic of shipwrecked men is at least rumoured to have disguised his calculated gamble to appropriate the voyage's financial rewards. As Lamb points out, these pretences united the history of navigation with the political history of England.

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Lamb's analysis of the encoding and enacting of the antinomies of metropolitan government on ships and beaches in the South Seas up to the mid-eighteenth century remains relevant to later voyages and illuminates much-debated events such as Cook's death and the *Bounty* mutiny. To what extent did the critique of despotism inflect responses to the absolute command of naval captains? How did models of monarchic and paternal authority support or undermine one another? These tensions certainly entered into the way in which crises of shipboard authority were written about, and they may well have entered into the making of the crises themselves. Such questions are not pursued here but they do have a wider theoretical implication that reinforces the point made earlier. Accounts of political behaviour in the South Seas do not necessarily belong to a space of otherness. The political forms witnessed are not necessarily understood as exotic, valued for their strangeness, or read as utopian forms.

In Chapter 1, as in the practices of the *Bounty* mutineers, the utopias were those of castaways or mutineers attempting to exemplify a republican political form. Chapter 2 points to the converse possibility, where indigenous sociality is perceived and upheld not for its primitivism but for its very affinity with European institutions. In this chapter Harry Liebersohn reminds us that it is vital to avoid vague talk of 'European representation' and instead to be specific about which Europeans, where and for whom. Earlier observers of stratified Oceanic chiefdoms had mixed adjudications, or, like Georg Forster on Cook's second voyage, were positively critical of what they saw as aristocratic indolence and corruption. Russian artist Louis Choris, however, addressed his work specifically to the aristocratic elites of three countries in the wake of the defeat of Napoleon and the social and political revolutions associated with his name. The interests of this class can be seen to shape Choris's images of the Hawaiian king, Kamehameha, and associated texts such as Kotzebue's voyage narrative. Kamehameha is a conservative modernizer, an enlightened ruler, but one who seeks to maintain order through tradition.

While the texts concerning Hawaii touch upon the 'corrupt' features of the regime that loomed much larger in the accounts of evangelical missionaries, the visual record is sanitized and essentially affirmative. The images of Kamehameha and of Queen Ka'ahumanu complement the portraits of the voyage's aristocratic sponsors, and as an ensemble naturalize monarchy in a fashion appropriate to the moment, when that class imagined itself triumphant. Liebersohn's term *savage nobility* evokes more than a further stereotype of the 'noble savage' type. It points rather to the dynamic way in which particular constructions of indigenous peoples were mobilized in order to animate or reinforce their European counterparts. The rhetoric at issue here proceeds not by way of self–other juxtaposition but by something like analogy.

If the chapters of this book insist on the doubleness of European vision – a vision that sees home via abroad, that thinks the familiar through the strange as well as vice versa – they do not explicitly address the question of how European accounts and images are shaped by sites and peoples encountered.

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If we want to credit the extent to which Shelvocke's pretences and Choris's portraits were defined by metropolitan histories, we do not want to suggest that the Pacific was itself somehow irrelevant to these texts and images. Oceanic peoples, in particular, were not, like the Great Southern Continent, powerful precisely because they were unknown; instead, they were powerful in particular ways that had determining impacts upon the visual and textual archives of European voyaging.

This point is demonstrated in a compelling fashion by Bronwen Douglas in her wide-ranging and reflective Chapter 3. She starts by suggesting (after Susanne Langer) that visual symbolism packs in a plenitude of sense impressions that are often suppressed or displaced in textual information. The contrasting values of word and pictures can, of course, be endlessly debated, but the point makes sense in this context, in drawing attention to the scope for 'indigenous' imprints of various kinds in colonial visual imagery.

The suggestion that 'indigenous countersigns' or 'oblique stamps' of indigenous agency may be present in colonial texts and images is a step of much wider importance for cross-cultural history and historical anthropology, because it takes us out of a trap or dilemma imposed by the influential critique of Orientalism. It was, of course, once important to insist that western representations of non-western others were produced and politically determined; and that their evocations of truth – as well as mere stereotypes – were discursive artefacts of special kinds. But if the critique was partly motivated by a concern to empower the people who had been disfigured or misrepresented, it risked locating them beyond representation altogether. While, in the case of eighteenth and nineteenth century Oceania and Australia, oral history provides an alternative to colonial imagery, it illuminates different dimensions of past culture and experience. It is vital that we recognize that colonial sources can be read against the grain. Despite their constructed character, they communicate a great deal in direct ways and, most importantly, in the kinds of indirect or oblique ways that Douglas focuses upon in her chapter, specifically through the example of the French images of the Kanak man. Although the presence of classical convention cannot be denied here, the important point is that a particular heroicized martial convention was seen to be appropriate: it manifested the power of the Kanaks and their effective intimidation of the French, particularly through a theatrical display of cannibalism, that elicited consternation and horror, and appears to have been intended to do precisely that.

Chapter 3 also reveals the ways in which visual and textual images at times sustain each other, and at other times conflict. Various historians of ideas and anthropological thought, including Smith, have discerned a shift over the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries from fluid ideas of human variety to essentialized racial categories, and Douglas's chapter generally reinforces this thesis. It is, however, precisely the combination of visual and textual evidence that makes it clear that perceptions were often inconsistent and unresolved.

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Michael Rosenthal's Chapter 4 shifts the scene from the Pacific Islands to Australia and from the fleeting encounters associated with voyages to the longer term contradiction inaugurated by colonization. Even the more deleterious of the ramifications of brief visits, such as introduced diseases, were hardly of the same order as the establishment of settlements that made a claim to land, immediately threatening the livelihood and autonomy of prior owners. The chapters in the second part of this book explore the refraction of colonialism in art – in the first instance with a backward look to its metropolitan resonances, in the second with respect to the conventions of melancholy, and thirdly in relation to the representation of indigenous people – to reveal again the ambivalences typical of much art and visual imagery.

Chapter 4 adheres to the 'double vision' theme, drawing attention to a striking contradiction in the early visual representation of the penal settlement of Sydney. While some journalism insisted on the suitably harsh character of conditions in the place, and the likelihood of permanent hostility between settlers and Aboriginal people, other texts, together with a significant body of visual material, evoke the settlement in unexpectedly Arcadian terms. Remarkably, Sydney could be represented as a sort of paradise at a time when London could not possibly have been; what was at issue in controversy about the architectural development of the city under Governor Macquarie was precisely the issue of whether the place aspired to the status of a new Rome rather than that of a distant gaol.

If colonial Australian art was often subsequently to return to the evocation of the promised land, it had a darker side which is the theme of Ian McLean's Chapter 5. Noting that recent Australian cultural criticism has been preoccupied with a kind of dread concerning the grimness of the land and its history, McLean argues that this melancholy can be traced back to early colonial art, and indeed has a much deeper genealogy, one intimately linked with art, voyaging and colonialism in western thought. The Oceanic utopias of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that Lamb refers to can be seen not only to create domains outside commerce and history, but also to cure the disease of melancholy. It is the promise of this transcendence and its continual lapse that pervades Australian colonial art. McLean argues this persuasively through a wide-ranging discussion that culminates in an analysis of the renowned Tasmanian paintings of John Glover. The pastoral views suggest a triumph of the picturesque over the grotesque, yet the works featuring Aboriginal people are distinctively gothic, notable for their sinuous and in fact grotesque eucalypts. The faltering and incomplete character of redemption here indicates a contrast between Australian and North American landscape art and indeed between Australian and American cultures. While, for painters such as Thomas Cole, 'the melancholy origins of the place' in the dispossession of the indigenous peoples 'are completely repressed', in Australia art and aesthetics 'failed to cement the invasion'. This conclusion to McLean's chapter emphasizes the incompleteness of colonialism as a civilizing and transformative endeavour, and this theme, vital to the subsequent sections of the book,

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is illustrated in another way by Leonard Bell's Chapter 6, on a highly distinctive work by C. F. Goldie, a painter of Maori who was enormously popular in New Zealand though not widely known elsewhere. Many of Goldie's portraits are melancholy images of aged Maori, suggesting (like E. S. Curtis's classic photographs of native Americans) the passing of the race. '*All 'e same T'e Pakeha*' is entirely different, and calls into question the terms in which most portraits of Pacific peoples have been interpreted. In line with the theories of colonial culture alluded to earlier, the tendency has been to interpret such works, whether produced at the end of the eighteenth century or the end of the twentieth, in terms of an unambiguous power relation. The European artist is the active viewer and producer of representation; the indigenous person is passively objectified. Bell suggests that this particular painting, which is remarkable for the arresting and disconcerting way in which the subject seems not only to look back at, but to laugh at the viewer, is a site of exchange. There is no doubt that it is replete with ambiguities, and irrespective of Goldie's intentions and his own conception of the work, irrespective of how it may have been understood by its immediate, primarily Pakeha (white New Zealand settler) audience, it can clearly be read as a painting that empowers Te Aho, the Waikato chief depicted. The ambiguities that enable this reading have no doubt been variously more and less visible at different times since the painting was produced, and are surely enhanced by contemporary reflection upon the canon of colonial art, a process to which this book aims to contribute.

'*All 'e same T'e Pakeha*' is, moreover, a singularly appropriate painting for a book concerned both with cultural exchange and its limits. The work's ambiguous title may suggest that Te Aho is 'all the same as Pakeha', in the sense that he has adopted European clothing that may figure as a bit of a joke, even though the garments are not shown to be absurd or ill-fitting, as they are in many depictions of indigenous people from this period and earlier. Te Aho seems assured and confident in whatever cross-cultural trappings he possesses; that these do not detract from his Maoriness is indicated by the greenstone ornament and the *moko* (tattoo). As Bell points out, the title may also mean that 'the Pakeha are all the same', but in either case there is the implication that this confident Maori actor is at a point where cultures meet, where differences are connected but not effaced.

The dramatic shift in subject matter in the chapter that follows is appropriate to the cusp, or turning point, of the book. Up to this juncture two major phases in the formation of colonial cultures have been reviewed, and not one double vision but several have been identified. Colonial images and texts are typically energized by metropolitan predicaments, and by the places and people encountered. The Oceanic and antipodean peripheries may be sites for what is degraded, horrifying or savage, but their very remoteness from European polities, and their novelty as theatres of European action, make them sites for utopian transcendence too. Both Chapters 5 and 6 make it clear that these imaginative efforts do not proceed to inscribe a tabula rasa. Instead, like the colonial images and texts that Douglas discusses in Chapter 3, they are

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