

BOOK REVIEW

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Ann Laura Stoler. Race and the Education of Desire, Duke University Press, 1995.

Finally, I thank Lawrence Hirschfeld, whose work on children and racism has prompted me to hurl my epithets about 'psychologism' with much more care and to see how implicitly our post-colonial and postmodern analyses are both enabled and muffled by psychological insights, as we broach the politics of sentiment and the psychology of domination" (Stoler 1995: xiii-xiv).

The above sentiment, written in the preface to her text *Race and the Education of Desire*, neatly captures the unique and insightful aspects of Stoler's writing. The text, which examines Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (and the related seminars) for its often ignored or unseen insights on racism, provides an accessible and interesting account of racism as a practice of the state. From this perspective, Stoler engages not simply in an archaeology of Foucault's work on racism, nor does she praise Foucault's insights in yet another form of academic solipsism. Rather, her intention seems to be to explore how discourses of sexuality and race intersect, and to elaborate how we may better understand these intersections through an application of Foucault's work.

Further, in relation to the quote above, Stoler usefully draws out some of the ways in which racism is a psychologised practice, whereby she suggests that imperialism was a practice of "colonizing both bodies and minds" (4). Stoler's elaboration of Foucault's work thus pays attention to the complex ways in which practices of normalisation are extended from the state to the individual, and how such practices work to co-opt at the very moment they purport to support and welcome. This approach has important implications for how we may understand a 'psychology of racism'. Rather than locating this as being 'within people's heads' (as has been the approach typically taken within mainstream psychological research on racism), Stoler confirms that in order to 'get at racism' we

need to understand the complex relations that exist between institutionalised racism and the investments that people have in racist practices (cf. Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). Psychological discourses of racism thus not only create and reinforce oppressive ways of knowing: they may also allow for critical readings of race as a practice of subjectification.

Racism in Stoler's analysis is thus understood as being far more wide reaching and entrenched than what is often reported simply as the 'misguided opinions of a racist few'. Obviously much of this will already be blatantly obvious to scholars in the area of critical race and whiteness studies. However, the important focus that Stoler brings to this subject area, and one that has been elaborated in more recent work on race and whiteness (e.g., Moreton-Robinson, 2000), is the idea that:

Much of the anthropology of colonialism... has taken the categories of 'colonizer' and 'colonized' as givens, rather than as constructions that need to be explained. Scholars have focused more on colonizers' accounts of indigenous colonized societies than on how Europeans imagined themselves in the colonies and cultivated their distinctions from those to be ruled (pp. 98-99).

The implication of this for Stoler's analysis is that rather than simply reifying racialised categories, she is able to interrogate them for the privileges and oppressions they make possible. Intimately related to this is an examination of colonisers' claims to sovereignty, as is evidenced in her statement that:

the discourse of sovereignty [is one] in which the fact of domination is hidden in a language of legitimate rights (64).

Here Stoler refers to the claims of sovereignty that have been made by colonisers, and their basis not in *a priori* fact, but in practices of oppression and genocide. Examining these facts through the lenses of gender and sexuality thus

allows for a more nuanced, whilst at the same time thorough going, analysis of racialised practices in colonial nations. Thus as Stoler suggests,

State racism has never been gender-neutral in the management of sexuality; gender prescriptions for motherhood and manliness, as well as gendered assessments of perversion and subversion are part of the scaffolding on which the intimate technologies of racist policies rest (93).

Since its publication in 1995, Stoler's text has led to a number of practical applications of her work to understanding racialisation. In particular are some that have recently paid attention to the workings of race in the context Australia, such as Lorraine Johnson-Riordan's (forthcoming) insights into how state racism secures the privileges of white people as deserving of national protection, or my own work (Riggs, in press) on the possessive investments that white lesbians and gay men make when attempting to secure rights in the national space. These types of analyses contribute to the unsettling of claims to white sovereignty by engaging in examinations of how "Europeans imagine them[/our]selves", and the implications of this for challenging white privilege in Australia.

Stoler's text represents an important intervention into an academic climate that has for far too long seen a disjuncture between disembodied analysis of difference 'from afar', and practical, everyday uses of theoretical knowledges (cf. Nicoll, 2004). By bringing the work of Foucault (which for many may be difficult to access or understand) into dialogue with current calls for effective anti-racist practice, Stoler creates the possibility for working across the divide, and thus demonstrates the ongoing importance of theorising racialisation as both a state and individual practice of difference and oppression.

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Works Cited

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