

Global Civil War and Post-colonial Studies

Author(s): Heike Härting, University of Montreal

Preface

Professor Heike Härting has engaged in a program of research focused on the relationship between globalization and violence and how violence has tended to be rendered "normal" or "expected" in a globalizing world. This paper is part of this research program and begins with the concept of "global civil war" presented by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their recent joint work. Professor Härting argues that their conception is too limited because it fails to take adequate account of the rootedness of such war in long-standing power relations of imperialism and colonial modernity. By failing to take these linkages into account, dominant, more wealthy countries can take a position of bringing civilization to the unruly and violent practices of so-called rogue states or other failing states. Such a position, she argues, verges on hypocrisy because the very problems faced in these parts of the world are linked intimately to the violence and racialization characteristic of imperialism and colonialism that formed these states in the first place. In bringing post-colonial theory to bear upon these questions, Professor Härting also makes reference to literary works focused on the civil war in Sri Lanka by Michael Ondaatje and Jean Arasanayagam. The paper finishes up with some thoughts on why we are constantly faced with assumed permanent emergencies, a state of being even more pronounced since the declaration of war on "global terror" after the events of 11 September 2001.

William D. Coleman, McMaster University

Global Civil War: Preliminary Definitions

This essay addresses the lack of a post-colonial critique of emerging political and cultural theories of global war (Hardt and Negri 2004; Kaldor 2001; Held 2003; Clark 2003). With the exception of Paul Gilroy's study *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2005) and Gayatri Spivak's essay "Terror: A Speech After 9-11," which in part examine how discourses of racialized violence legitimize contemporary global wars and their "extreme" "civilizing mission" (Spivak 2004, 82), post-colonial theorists have so far been reluctant to engage in a sustained critique of global warfare. On the one hand, this reluctance might derive from the field's preferred critical engagement, as Tim Brennan observes, with Eurocentrism rather than questions of "military occupation" (2004, 132). On the other, such a reluctance seems surprising given that post-colonial studies is traditionally concerned with the ways in which past and contemporary forms of imperial, colonial, and racialized violence have shaped present subjectivities and political, economic, and social relationships. More importantly, the task of post-colonial studies remains the unsettling of contemporary configurations of what Diana Brydon identifies as "imperial *and* colonial habits of mind" (1995, 10-11), and along with David Goldberg and Ato Quayson, the "dismantling of the conditions that produce [social] violence and anguish" (2002, xiii). Thus, a critical post-colonial anatomy of the social and cultural logic of global civil warfare would seem intrinsic to the field's traditional research concerns. More specifically, while, amongst many others, such theorists and writers as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Anne McClintock, Wole Soyinka, Ken Saro Wiva, and Bapsi Sidhwa have written extensively about civil and communal warfare, they have done so in the context of particular anti-colonial liberation struggles and

post-colonial and neo-colonial nation formation. In part, these writers' works underlie but are not sufficiently acknowledged as a constitutive force in the articulation of dominant contemporary notions of global civil war.

The central argument of this paper builds on the understanding of global civil war which Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri advance in their study *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, the sequel to *Empire*. They suggest that global civil war designates both an absolute "regime of biopower" (2004, 13) and a form of warfare that is no longer fought between two sovereign states but on one, steadily expanding territory not demarcated by conventional national boundaries. In this sense, global civil war is intrinsic to what the two theorists call empire, namely the formation of a new global sovereignty that supersedes colonialism and imperialism, is dissociated from national and supranational institutions, and emerges from the autonomous and immanent logic of capital expansion and management. By the same logic of immanence, empire is a cultural, economic, and political formation that gives rise to its own movement of resistance or counter-empire.¹ In contrast to Hardt and Negri's at times limited notion of global civil war, I suggest to conceptualize global civil war as a social and historical formation rooted in the history of imperial and colonial modernity. As with imperial wars, global civil wars both appropriate the guerilla tactics of insurgency warfare — an argument also made by Hardt and Negri — and, in contrast to their theory of global civil war, rely on the historical deployment of racialized violence and the perpetual brutalization and surveillance of civil society, often — but not exclusively — in the name of a humanitarian, peacekeeping, or protective cause.² The notion of the "civil" in "global civil war" is thus frequently synonymous with the dismantling of civil rights and an internationally condoned assignment to "civilize" so-called rogue or failed nation states. In this sense, we may call the US-led "war against terror" a "global civil war" without, however, reducing the latter concept to a post-9-11 phenomenon. For, polemically speaking, despite its involvement of a wide range of global actors, the "war on terror" remains a national project of the United States. It mobilizes patriotic sentiments of US-American national destiny on a global scale and depends on the simultaneous denial and reinvention of the United States' imperial past.

Contextualizing the notion of global civil war in the history of imperial modernity and violence, then, seeks to adumbrate some of the ways in which contemporary theories of global civil war tend to eclipse the post-colonial moment of these wars. In particular, I wish to ask how contemporary representations of war contribute to the construction of a normalizing global imaginary of war. I use the latter term to refer to those hegemonic narratives through which the West comes to imagine itself as a civilizing bulwark against the violent forces of unruly and terrorist rogue states and to accept global war and racial violence as a historical inevitability of the rule of neo-liberal globalization. Furthermore, how should we conceptualize the post-colonial moment of global civil war, and how does identifying and problematizing such a moment expand and trouble present concepts of global warfare?

To engage with these questions, the first part of this paper provides a brief survey of the ways in which a number of post-colonial theorists have begun to address the particular phenomena of global armed conflict but, by and large, refrained from a systematic discussion of global civil warfare. The paper's second part elaborates my critique of dominant notions of global civil war through a discussion of Hardt and Negri's and, to a lesser extent, Jean-Luc Nancy's writings on globalization and war. Their work, I argue, situates global civil war outside earlier narratives of violence, resistance, and imperialism, when, in fact, all of these narratives either underlie or bleed into the present causes, investments, and media representations of global civil war. In order to develop a post-colonial understanding of global civil war that helps us think beyond presentist models of global war, parts four and five of this paper draw from Jean Arasanayagam's and Michael Ondaatje's fictional accounts of

Sri Lanka's prolonged civil war to question received ways of legitimizing violence and to reread the putatively biopolitical character of global civil wars through, what Achille Mbembe calls, the "necropolitics" (2003, 11) of global imperialism. Such a rereading, I propose, emphasizes how global civil war operates through the long-term militarization and brutalization of former colonial societies. The sixth and last part of this paper suggests a post-colonial reading of the ways in which the assumed state of a permanent global emergency relies on routinized forms of racial violence and extreme violent global warfare in order to generate disposable human beings and, to use Giorgio Agamben's phrase, "politicize death" (1998, 160).

Post-colonial Readings of Global War

Recent developments in post-colonial studies suggest, according to Brennan, that scholars in the field had to "retool" themselves as "globalization theorists" and consider themselves "as functioning in a larger division of intellectual labor" (2004, 138). What does this "retooling" look like? In particular, how do post-colonial scholars enter and shape debates on global war and violence?³ While there has been prolific research on the construction of diasporic, hybrid, and cosmopolitan subjectivities and transnational imaginaries, or on what Simon Gikandi sees as globalization's discourse of cultural "celebration" (2001, 629), less attention has been paid to globalization as "a discourse of failure and atrophy" (ibid., 638). To understand the latter, for example, Gikandi argues, we have to track back the death of two young Guinean men "whose bodies were found in the cargo hold of a plane in Brussels in August 1998" (ibid., 630) to particular Enlightenment discourses of autonomy and rationality, time, and progress that inform colonial and global modernities. In Gikandi's reading — which would warrant a much more detailed analysis than I can offer here — the death of these two young African men provides the opportunity to conceptualize globalization as a new version of post-colonialism's critique of Eurocentrism and the failure of the post-colonial nation-state. The global, he maintains, "had to be reinvented as a substitute for nationalism" and the ideologically and politically "vanishing 'Third World'" (ibid., 646) in the wake of the post-Cold War era. In this context, globalization is a violent process that erases the political, historical and cultural presence of the erstwhile colonized from the global present. Their presence seems to be registered only with reference to the ways in which it upsets Eurocentric notions of the nation, belonging, affect, and subjectivity.

Similarly, yet from a different political perspective, Neil Larsen enters the debate on globalization through a "material genealogy of postcolonialism" (2000, 33) and foregrounds the historical and economic continuities between imperialism, colonialism, post-colonialism, and globalization. Larsen traces the role of the nation as the grounding figure that binds all of these terms. Yet, in contrast to those who tend to announce globalization as a new post-national era, Larsen suggests that imperialism and its culmination in World War I and II, along with the wars' concomitant mass migrations, made it impossible, if not obsolete, to reflect on the "world" in terms of homogenous, "particular national histories and experiences" (ibid., 32). Rather, the violent crises of imperialism (WW I and II, Bandung era) gave rise to both a "transeuropean" (ibid., 31) configuration of anti-imperial and revolutionary movements and a cultural conceptualization of the nation as a space of liberation, reflected in national liberation struggles that "*re-essentialized, or de-europeanized* national space or imaginary" (ibid., 34). Under today's economic pressures of globalization, the Fanonian and Marxian ideal of a transeuropean nation — an ideal, which, as Fanon argues, has always been threatened by the co-optation of the colonial elites into a neo-colonial European appropriation of the newly independent nation-state — has collapsed. In particular, the transeuropean nation is being transformed into "an institutional/ideological entity that, precisely because it has been rendered inoperative as a site of the accumulation and control of capital, seeks to compensate for this in undergoing a radical *reparticularization* verging, in the most extreme cases (e.g., Afghanistan,

Serbia) on a *desecularization*" (ibid., 43). In other words, Larsen suggests that contemporary ethnic and civil wars are both a result of the financial restructuring of the globe and its attending disintegration of the nation-state. Yet, what remains troubling and unexplained is why the disintegration of the nation should automatically lead to a violent return to cultural and religious particularism and essentialism. Are we to assume that in all cases of global civil war we are confronted with a return of archaic and primordialist attitudes of ethnic absolutism, to use Paul Gilroy's term, previously kept in check by the authoritative rather than emancipatory operations of the post-colonial nation-state? Indeed, to what extent does a culturalist — if not primordialist — reading of global war account for the at once global and local politicization and racialization of violence? Larsen, however, reminds us that the destruction of the "nationalized economic regimes in the third (and former 'second' world)" presents a global crisis whose consequences are also "dire" for the "global hegemony [US, Western Europe, Japan]" (ibid., 42). Thus, rather than abandoning the nation-state as politically compromised and ineffective in a global world, he affords it a central and by far not yet resolved role in dealing with the production of a new global order.

If Larsen sees contemporary wars as a product of the economic disempowerment of nation-states, Arjun Appadurai locates the extreme violence of contemporary global civil wars in larger cultural and ideological formations. Although Appadurai concedes that these wars must be read within the context of the crisis of legitimation of the nation-state (1996, 157) and the biopolitics of the colonial and modern nation-state, he suggests that they are culturalist in that they operate through the "conscious mobilization of cultural differences in the service of a larger national and transnational politics" (ibid., 15). Culturalist movements, he suggests, create communities of sentiment that are "comprehensible only within specific cultural frames of meaning and style and larger historical frames of power and discipline" (ibid., 148), the distribution of images, and the "imagination" (ibid., 149). Culturalist or ethnic violence, he argues, should not be conceptualized as a "primordial sentiment" (ibid., 149). Instead, understanding such violence involves addressing the local, social, and cultural construction of intimacy and the physical and psychic embodiment of rage and pain. Here, Appadurai's insistence on a social critique of the embodiment and localization of culturalist violence in a post-national or global context can serve as a possible trajectory for a post-colonial critique of global civil war. Indeed, as I will argue in section three, it is the historical production of pain and death, or of what Mbembe describes as the "necropolitics" (2003, 11) of modernity, that allows us to understand global civil war in localized and historically situated terms.

What all these post-colonial readings of global civil war have in common is their desire to respond to war in an ethical fashion. What does this entail? In her essay "Terror: A Speech After 9-11," Spivak considers the "war on terror" as synonymous with global civil war and emphasizes its archaic and coercive rhetoric of cultural incommensurability. Here the term global war distracts from the fact that the war on terror, despite its involvement of the Northern alliance, refers to an imperial war fought unilaterally by the United States without UN sanction. "The war," Spivak explains, "is part of an alibi every imperialism has given itself, a civilising mission carried to the extreme, as it always must be. It is a war on terrorism reduced at home to due process, to a criminal case...a war zoomed down to a lawsuit and zoomed up to face an abstraction" (2004, 82). In this sense, Spivak's assessment coincides with Hardt and Negri's (2000, 13) observation that the primordialist and Manichaean rhetoric of global civil war banalizes war as a form of "police action," creates an absolute enemy, and "sacrilizes" war by grounding military pursuits in putatively ethical claims that protect and reinstate democracy, "order and peace." In other words, global civil war depends on the construction of an enemy by mobilizing and criminalizing cultural Otherness. For this reason, the humanities have an important role to play in responding to and containing global civil war. The foremost pedagogical task, Spivak argues, consists in training "for the eruption of the ethical [understood as] an interruption of

the epistemological, which is the attempt to construct the other as object of knowledge" (2004, 83). In other words, a post-colonial critique of global civil war ought to examine how global civil war generates human subjects differentially on a global scale. Thus, what post-colonial studies needs to bring to bear on globalization studies is, first, a detailed analysis of the ways in which post-colonial writing participates in the cultural production of competing narratives of global civil warfare, and, second, a critique of global civil war that accounts for the racialized violence and identity politics that frequently fuel global conflict or are mobilized in its service. Analyzing the ways in which global war generates particular subjectivities is of great importance since global capitalism thrives and depends on both the violent production and commodification of identity and the total militarization of national and global social relationships.

The next section of this paper examines the ways in which a number of cultural narratives of global civil war rearticulate traditional concepts of war. However, by contextualizing war in a presentist and, at times, Eurocentric understanding of globalization, these narratives risk reinforcing rather than destabilizing dominant legitimizing practices of global warfare.

Situating Global Civil War

If globalization refers to the uneven process of restructuring social, political, and economic space within and beyond the nation-state, then a change of the concept of war, its means and purposes, as well as its present ubiquity seem logical effects of globalization. For example, in *Empire*, Hardt and Negri suggest that although the world has never been at peace, presently war seems to be the single most characteristic feature of "Empire." The latter, they argue, is continuously embroiled in bloodshed, yet "always dedicated to peace — a perpetual and universal peace outside of history" (2000, xv). The Kantian allusion provides a first glimpse at how we might begin to address the complex phenomenon of global war. As a preliminary hypothesis, I wish to suggest that global civil war cannot be reduced to exceptional forms of extreme violence enacted in different or unconnected theatres of war. Rather, it relates to indirect yet systemic forms of political and economic coercion. Practically, the concept of global civil war, as, for example, Mary Kaldor suggests, has three characteristics: first, global civil war works through the strategic as well as indiscriminate abuse of human rights, frequently legitimized on grounds of exclusive identity politics; second, the war is not winnable but serves to rally the population around political causes; third, global war generates an economy of plunder and piracy while the state maintains and defends its stakes by deploying mercenaries and engaging in illegal global arms trade. Although this description helps elucidate the global aspects of such historically prolonged armed conflicts as Sri Lanka's and Rwanda's, it brushes over the epistemological dimension of global warfare, namely its frequently dehistoricized conceptualization and its need to mobilize exclusionary identity politics. What remains invisible is that global civil war is intrinsic to predatory global capitalism and aims at maintaining a historically received global order of unequal power relationships. Moreover, the extreme and often genocidal violence of global civil war — a phenomenon that connects old and new theatres of war — frequently "attempts to eradicate the concept of human altogether, replacing it with the idea of an irrevocable progress towards the eradication of superfluous human beings" (Razack 2004, 160).

Hardt and Negri, then, examine the capitalist, biopolitical, and cultural logic of contemporary warfare by relating global war to both the development of digital technologies for military uses and the increasing importance of immaterial labour, namely, labour engaged in the production of ideas, knowledge, and subjectivities. Their analysis primarily serves to navigate a way out of what they see as a permanent state of exception and to map strategies of resistance for the multitude, their term for a new global class of people loosely and strategically united in their struggle against globalization.

Hardt and Negri's reading of global civil war is instructive for its delineation of the ways in which the "war machinery" — to use Hardt and Negri's Deleuzian terminology — of the United States and its allied partners has appropriated methods of guerrilla and liberation warfare, formerly used in the struggle against colonialism. It seems to me, however, that this kind of appropriation cannot be reduced to the ways in which the non-hierarchical organization of guerrilla troops and warfare have been transformed into an authoritarian chain of command structure, characteristic of conventional armies.

Moreover, emphasizing that war is quickly "becoming a general phenomenon, global and interminable" (2004, 3), they propose to read all contemporary wars as "global civil wars" (*ibid.*, 4) or "netwars" (*ibid.*, 55). Thus, Hardt and Negri tend to conceptualize these wars as postmodern phenomena rather than wars that either pursue particular imperial projects of reordering current global geopolitics or that have long-standing post-colonial roots but have mutated into global civil warfare. Understood as "*counterinsurgencies*" (*ibid.*, 37), global civil wars change a people's entire social and political makeup, are connected with other war zones, and designate a process in which the distinction between war and civil society has become obsolete. Unlike conventional civil wars, which are considered atavistic remnants of modernity and effects of imperial forms of nation-formation (Horowitz 1985) and emerge out of competing claims to territorial sovereignty, global civil wars are fought by mercenary forces across a global rather than national terrain and aim at population control rather than territorial autonomy.

What, then, is new about global civil war? If war is presumably no longer bound to territorial control and direct conquest but, instead, has become a reflection of media velocity, high-tech combat (Der Derian 2001) and capitalism's need to restructure the planet's markets and geopolitics of resource control, to what extent, we may ask, does global civil war present a qualitatively new phenomenon, rather than, say, a quantitative change of the intensity of warfare, depending on technological development. Furthermore, is global civil war merely another term for the recently revived rhetoric of just wars in a global context? What differentiates Hardt and Negri's notion of "global civil war" from Michael Ignatieff's (1998, 5) notion of "postmodern war," since both terms refer to changes in the organization and modes of contemporary ethnic civil war? Or, how does the term relate to Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of the "confronted community" (2003a, 23)? For, Nancy vehemently opposes such primordialist explanations of contemporary warfare as put forward by Samuel Huntington. Instead, global civil war designates an epistemological and material war of a specific yet globalized civilization, namely of the West, whose values of monotheism, self-presence, and truth have exhausted themselves. Nancy's approach to global war not only makes legible the ways in which global civil war arises as an epistemological problem of Western metaphysics but, by the same token, situates global war within a particularly localized critique of Eurocentrism.

To Nancy, then, contemporary global warfare is symptomatic of the ways in which the idea of community is confronted with itself, with its insistence on and desire for essence, unequivocal identity, propriety, omnipresence, and purity. Indeed, global civil war suggests that Western civilization, understood, in Nancy's words, as a "work of death" (2003a, 24), is finally confronted with its own spiritual emptiness and self-destructive logic of sameness. In this context, global civil war is symptomatic for the disintegration of Western values and truth claims and is interpreted solely as a critique of Eurocentrism, an argument that inadvertently remains indebted to the idea that civil wars result from the disintegration of the nation-state and its attendant epistemologies of belonging. What we find at the horizon of Nancy's critique, then, is the hope of inventing new ways in which the "Euro-Mediterranean world" relates to itself as "Other," to "'value', to the 'absolute', to 'truth'" (2003b, 53). Such a critique of contemporary warfare, however, can think global civil war neither beyond the

West's concern with itself nor within different genealogies of both failed and ongoing processes of decolonization. Instead, it begs the question of what or who is the "global" in "global civil war." Indeed, as I argue throughout this essay, the way in which we define the "global" in the context of global war largely determines how we read the particular political investments and interests that underlie global war. For example, if global war is primarily a byproduct of and intrinsic to Empire and its consolidation, it appears to be inevitable and takes place outside discourses of political legitimization and accountability. From a different perspective, conceptualizing global civil war as being engineered by the Global North, that is, predominantly by the United States and its allied nations, reveals the ways in which global war deeply invests in and ensures the continuous accumulation of global capital and centralized practices of uneven capital distribution. Furthermore, if "the global" designates — as I think it does — a cultural and social space inhabited by those who are impoverished, dispossessed, and violated by the economic and geopolitical restructuring of the world, then the "global" also delineates a process of subject constitution governed by the construction of absolute difference, abjection, and dehumanization.

With its implication of having superseded national politics and interests, the term global civil war appears to require that we accept Hardt and Negri's often criticized assumption that the nation-state no longer mediates claims to sovereignty and power (Tilly 2003; Brennan 2003). For the moment, however, I will refrain from participating in the controversy over the role of the nation in Hardt and Negri's work. Instead, I suggest that while their understanding of global civil war does not explicitly engage in a critique of global violence, but instead focuses on an analysis of the structures of command and strategies of contemporary warfare, it helps raise questions through which to sketch a post-colonial critique of global violence. More specifically, in the next three parts of this paper, I wish to relocate three aspects of their argument in a post-colonial framework: first, the preponderance of biopolitics in their notion of global civil war; second, the construction of normalizing narratives of global civil war, specifically the rhetoric of the archaic; and third, the relationship between global civil war and the notion of the state of exception or emergency. As Hannah Arendt already implied in 1963, the terms global civil war and the state of exception function in tandem as signs and instruments of modern totalitarianism. Today, the state of exception has become globalization's most coercive instrument in regulating the limits of global citizenship and the legal status of particular individuals such as prisoners of war and refugees. More specifically, I suggest that the term "global civil war," specifically when understood as a version of the US-led "war against terror," serves to normalize and legitimize the transformation of constitutional democracy into a permanent but unacknowledged state of exception. The latter is either smothered in a propagandistic rhetoric of fear or shrouded in a misleading public debate over political prevention. From a post-colonial perspective, however, the state of exception, as I propose in the last section of this paper, also designates a cultural and intellectual disposition toward accepting global war and its reliance on the operations of racialized violence as a historical norm and inevitable outcome of Western history. The next part shifts a predominantly biopolitical understanding of global civil war towards an analysis of the necropolitics of these wars.

The Necropolitics of Global Civil War

As with other civil wars, global civil war affects society as a whole. It "tends," as Hardt and Negri argue, "towards the *absolute*" (2004, 18) in that it polices civil society through elaborate security and surveillance systems, negates the rule of law, militarizes quotidian space, diminishes civil rights to the degree in which it increases torture, illegal incarceration, disappearances, and emergency regulations, and fosters a culture of fear, intolerance, and violent discrimination. Hardt and Negri, therefore, rightly argue that war itself has become "a *permanent social relation*" and thereby the

"primary organizing principle of society, and politics merely one of its means or guises" (ibid., 12). What Hardt and Negri suggest is new about today's global civil war is its biopolitical agenda. "War," they write, "has become a *regime of biopower*, that is, a form of rule aimed not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all aspects of social life" (ibid., 13). For example, the biopolitics of war entails the production of particular economic and cultural subjectivities, "creating new hearts and minds through the construction of new circuits of communication, new forms of social collaboration, and new modes of interaction" (ibid., 81). The ambiguity of Hardt and Negri's notion of biopower subtly resides in their adaptation of the language of social and political revolution, for it seems to be the *regime of biopower*, rather than the multitude, that absorbs and transvalues the revolutionary, that is, anti-colonial, spirit inscribed in the rhetoric of "new hearts and minds." At the same time, they argue, that a biopolitical definition of war "changes war's entire legal framework" (ibid., 21-22), for "whereas war previously was *regulated* through legal structures, war has become *regulating* by constructing and imposing its own legal framework" (ibid. 22). If none of this, at least in my mind, is marked by a particular originality of thought, then this may have to do with Hardt and Negri's reluctance to address the historical continuities between earlier wars of decolonization and contemporary global wars, the legacies of imperialism, and the imperative of race in orchestrating imperial, neo-colonial, and today's global civil wars.

In fact, while biopolitical global warfare might be a new phenomenon on the sovereign territory of the United States of America, specifically after 11 September 2001, it is hardly news to "people in the former colonies, who," as Crystal Bartolovich points out, "have long lived ...at the 'crossroads' of global forces" (2000, 136), violence, and wars. For example, in Sri Lanka global civil war has been a permanent, everyday reality since the country's Sinhala Only Movement in 1956, and become manifest in the normalization of racialized violence as a means of politics since President Jayawardene's election campaign for a referendum in 1982, which led to the state-endorsed anti-Tamil pogrom in 1983. Similarly, according to Achille Mbembe, biopolitical warfare was intrinsic to the European imperial project in "Africa," where "war machines emerged" as early as "the last quarter of the twentieth century" (2003, 33). In other words, although Hardt and Negri argue convincingly that it is the ubiquity of global war that restructures social relationships on the global and local level, their concept tends to dehistoricize different genealogies and effects of global civil war. Indeed, not only do Hardt and Negri refrain from reading wars of decolonization as central to the construction of what David Harvey sees as the uneven "spatial exchange relations" (2003, 31) necessary for the expansion of capital accumulation and of which global war is an intrinsic feature, but they also dissociate global civil wars from the nation-state's still thriving ability to implement and exercise rigorous regimes of violence and surveillance. As for the term's epistemological formation, global civil war has been sanitized and no longer evokes the conventional association of civil war with "insurrection and resistance" (Agamben 2005, 2). Instead, it has become the effect of a diffuse new sovereignty (i.e., Hardt and Negri's Empire), a sovereignty that no longer decides over but has itself become a disembodied, that is, denationalized and normalized, state of exception. Yet, to talk about the disembodiment of global war not only reinforces media-supported ideologies of high-tech precision wars without casualties, but it also represses narratives about the ways in which the *modi operandi* of global war come to be embodied differently in different sites of war.

In her short story "Man Without a Mask" (1995), the Sri Lankan writer Jean Arasanayagam describes the global dimensions of a war that is usually considered an ethnic civil war restricted to internally competing claims to territorial, cultural, and national sovereignty between the country's Sinhalese and Tamil population. Told by an elite mercenary who clandestinely works for the ruling members of the government and leads a group of highly trained assassins, the story follows the thoughts of its narrator and contemplates the politicization of violence and death. As a mercenary and possibly an

ex-SAS (British Special Air Service) veteran the Sri Lankan Government hired after the failure of the Indo-Lankan Accord, the narrator signifies the "privatization of [Sri Lanka's] war" (Tambiah 1996, 6) and, thus, the reign of a global free market economy through which the state hands over its institutions and services to private corporations, including its army, and profits from the unrestricted global and illegal trade in war technologies. Like a craftsman, the mercenary finds satisfaction in the precision and methodical cleanliness of his work, in being, as he says, "a hunter. Not a predator" in his ability to leave "morality" out of "this business" (Arasanayagam 1995, 98). He is an extreme and perverted version of what Martin Shaw describes as the " 'soldier-scholar,'...the archetype of the new [global] officer" (1999, 60). As a self-proclaimed "scholar or scribe" (ibid., 100), the mercenary plots maps of death. Shortly before he reaches his victim, a politician who underestimated the political ambition of his enemy, he comments that bullet holes in a human body comprise a new kind of language: "The machine gun splutters. The body is pitted, pricked out with an indecipherable message. They are the braille marks of the new fictions. People are still so slow to comprehend their meaning" (ibid., 100). These new maps or fictions of global war, I suggest, describe what Etienne Balibar calls ultra-objective and ultra-subjective violence and characterize how global civil war both generates bare life and manages and instrumentalizes death.

According to Balibar, ultra-objective violence suggests the systematic "naturalization of asymmetrical relations of power" (2001, 27) brought about, for instance, by the Sri Lankan government's prolonged abuse of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which, in the past plunged the country into a permanent state of emergency, facilitated the random arrest of and almost absolute rule over citizens, and thus created a culture of fear and a reversal of moral and social values. As the story clarifies, under conditions of systematic or ultra-objective violence, "corruption" becomes "virtue" and "the most vile" man wears the mask of the sage and "innocent householder" (Arasanayagam 1995, 102). In this milieu, the mercenary has no need for a mask, because he bears a face of ordinary violence that is "perfectly safe" (ibid., 102) in a society structured by habitual and systemic violence. But the logic of the "new fictions" of political violence is also ultra-subjective because it is "intentional" and has a "determinate goal" (Balibar 2001, 25), namely the making and elimination of what Balibar calls "disposable people" in order to generate and maintain a profitable global economy of violence. The logic of ultra-subjective violence presents itself through the fictions of ethnicity and identity as they are advanced and instrumentalized in the name of national sovereignty. The mercenary perfectly symbolizes what Balibar means when he writes that "we have entered a world of the banality of objective cruelty" (ibid.). For if the fictions of global violence are scratched into the tortured bodies of war victims, the mercenary's detached behavior dramatizes a "will to 'de-corporation'," that is, to force disaffiliation from the other and from oneself — not just from belonging to the community and the political unity, but from the human condition" (ibid.). In other words, while global civil war becomes embodied in those whom it negates as social beings and thereby reduces to mere "flesh," it remains a disembodied enterprise for those who manage and orchestrate the politics of death of global war. It is through the dialectics of the embodiment and disembodiment of global violence that the dehumanization of the majority of the globe's population takes on a normative and naturalized state of existence.

Arasanayagam's short story also casts light on the limitations of Hardt and Negri's understanding of the biopolitics of global civil war, for the latter can account neither for the new fictions of violence in former colonial spaces nor for what Mbembe calls the "necropolitics" (2003, 11) of late modernity. Mbembe's term refers to his analysis of global warfare as the continuation of earlier and the development of new "forms of subjugation of life to the power of death" and its attendant reconfiguration of the "the relationship between resistance, sacrifice, and terror" (2003, 39).⁴ Despite the many theoretical intersections of Hardt and Negri's and Mbembe's work, Mbembe's notion of

necropolitics sees contemporary warfare as a species of such earlier "topographies of cruelty" (2003, 40) as the plantation system and the colony. Thus, in contrast to Hardt and Negri, Mbembe argues that the ways in which global violence and warfare produce subjectivities cannot be dissociated from the ways in which race serves as a means of both deciding over life and death and of legitimizing and making killing without impunity a customary practice of imperial population control. If global civil war is a continuation of imperial forms of warfare, it must rely on strategies of embodiment, that is, of politicizing and racializing the colonized or now "disposable" body for purposes of self-legitimization, specifically when taking decisions over the value of human life. After all, on a global level, race propels the ideological dynamics of ethnic and global civil war, while, on the local plane, it serves to orchestrate the brutalization and polarization of the domestic population, reinforcing and enacting patterns of racist exclusion and violence on the non-white body. In contrast to Hardt and Negri, then, Mbembe invites us to articulate imperial genealogies for the necropolitics of today's global civil wars.

In other words, if imperialism was a form of perpetual low-intensity global war, the biopolitics of imperialism aimed at creating different forms of subjectivization. For example, while in India, the imperial administration sought to create a functional class of native informants, in Africa and the Caribbean, the British Empire created the figure of *homo sacer*. The latter, as Agamben argues, refers to the one who can be killed but not sacrificed. *Homo sacer*, Agamben clarifies, constitutes "the originary exception in which human life is included in the political order in being exposed to an unconditional capacity to be killed" (1998, 85). Thus, the native is included in the imperial order only through her exclusion, while, simultaneously her humanity is stripped of social life and transformed into bare life, ready to be commodified on slavery's auction blocs and foreclosed from the dominant imperial psyche. Agamben's understanding of bare life derives from his reading of the Nazi death camps as the paradigmatic space of modernity in which the distinction between "fact and law" (ibid., 171), "outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit" (ibid., 170) dissolves and in which biopolitics takes the place of politics and "*homo sacer*" replaces the "citizen" (ibid., 171). While the notion of bare life is instrumental for theorizing biopolitics and the normalization and legalization of state violence under the pretense of, for example, protective arrests and preemptive strikes, it also suggests that the human body can be read as pure matter or in empirical terms. What goes unnoticed is to what extent the production of bare life depends on ideologies of race, that is, on the racialization of bodies, citizenship, and the concept of the human. For instance, under imperial rule, bare life is subjected to death and its politics in ways slightly different from those suggested by Agamben. More specifically, the killing of natives or slaves as bare life — then and today, as Rwanda's race-based genocide clarifies — not only configures human life in terms of its "capacity to be killed" (Agamben 1998, 114), that is as homicide and genocide outside of law and accountability, but also measures the value of human life on grounds of race. The making of bare life is a racialized and racializing process rooted within the necropolitics of colonialism. For, killing the native or slave presupposes the remaking of the human into bare life both through ideologies of pseudo-scientific racism and by subjecting them to what Orlando Patterson calls the "social death" (1982, 38) of the slave, that is, to a symbolic death of the human as a communal and social being that precedes physical death.⁵ Thus, imperialism's necropolitics involves the making of disposable lives through practices of zombification and the "redefinition of death" itself (Agamben 1998, 161). In this sense, imperialism not only facilitated the extreme forms of racialized violence characteristic of global civil war, but it also helped create the conditions for making bare life the acceptable state of being for the present majority of the globe's population.

Not unlike Jean Arasanayagam's short story, Mbembe's account of the Rwandan genocide and the Palestinian intifada suggests that the new global subjectivities are not so much the networked multitude Hardt and Negri imagine. Rather, emerging from the "new fictions" of global war, they are

the suicide bomber, the mercenary, the martyr, the child soldier, the victim of mass rape, the refugee, the woman dispossessed of her family and livelihood, the mutilated civilian, and the skeleton of the disappeared and murdered victims of global civil war. What these subjectivities witness is that, on one hand, living under conditions of global civil war means to live in "permanent...pain" (Mbembe 2003, 39) and, on the other hand, they refer back to the dialectical mechanisms of colonial violence. For under the Manichaeian pressures of colonialism, colonial violence always inaugurates a double process of subjection and subject formation. Frantz Fanon famously argues that anti-colonial violence operates historically on both collective and individual subject formation. For, on the one hand, "the native discovers reality [colonial alienation] and transforms it into the pattern of this customs, into the practice of violence and into his plan for freedom" (1963, 58), and on the other, a violent "war of liberation" instills in the individual a sense of "a collective history" (ibid., 93). Thus, as Robert Young suggests, anti-colonial violence "functions as a kind of psychotherapy of the oppressed" (2001, 295). Yet, it seems that read through the necropolitics of imperialism, global civil warfare no longer aims at the "pacification" of the colonial subject or the "degradation" of the "postcolonial subject" (ibid., 293) but, as I suggested earlier, at the complete abolishment of the human per se. We may therefore say that if global civil war produces new subjectivities, it does so through, what I have referred to as a process of zombification. Understood as sustained acts of negation, zombification — a term that harks back to Fanon — refers to a dialectical process of the embodiment and disembodiment of global war. The former refers to the exercise of ultra-objective violence — that is, the systematic "naturalization of asymmetrical relations of power" (Balibar 2001, 27) — in order to regulate, racialize, and extinguish human life at will, while the latter suggests the production of narratives of "de-corporation" (ibid., 25) and detachment by those who manage and administrate global civil war. The notion of zombification, however, connotes not only the exercise of, but also the exorcism of, the ways in which global war is scripted on and through the racialized body. Thus, a post-colonial understanding of global war needs to think through the necropolitics of war, including the uneven value historically and presently assigned to human life and the politicization of death. The latter issue will be addressed in the last section of this paper. The next section examines the cultural production and perpetuation of normative narratives of global warfare.

The Rhetoric of the Archaic and Michael Ondaatje's "Anil's Ghost"

Published shortly after Sri Lanka's civil war became entangled with the global politics of the South and the rise of the Sri Lankan nation-state to one of the war's principal and most corrupt actors, Ondaatje's novel *Anil's Ghost* dramatizes both the transformation of the country's civil war into a permanent state of exception and the failure of global non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to intervene in the war's rising human rights abuses and violent excesses. While the novel presents an extraordinary search for social justice through narrative and seeks to understand the operative modes of violence beyond their historical and social configurations, it also tends to sublimate and aestheticize violence by treating it as a normative element of human and, indeed, planetary life. My purpose here is to indicate that the novel's own project of dramatizing the complicity between religious and secular, anti-colonial and nationalist agents of war, and civilians and global actors (i.e., NGOs) remains compromised by the novel's aesthetic investment in a particular rhetoric of the archaic. The latter, I argue, unwittingly coincides with normative narratives of global war and facilitates the reader's detachment from the ways in which the Global North has reconstructed global life as a permanent state of exception.

Ondaatje's novel (2000) opens with an Author's Note that locates the narrative at a time when "the antigovernment insurgents in the south and the separatist guerrillas in the north...had declared war on the government" and "legal and illegal government squads were...sent out to hunt down" both

groups. In this instance, the Hobbesian rhetoric of a "war of all against all" is more than a cliché. In fact, it is symptomatic of the novel's ambiguous critique of the role of the Sri Lankan nation-state and its elaborate, modernist discourse of violence. The Note foreshadows what the narrator later repeats on several occasions, namely that Sri Lanka's war is a war fought "for the purpose of war" (ibid., 98) and for which "[t]here is no hope of affixing blame" (ibid., 17). In short, the "reason for war was war" (ibid., 43). At first glance, the narrative's emphasis on the war's self-perpetuating dynamics implies a Hobbesian understanding of violence as the natural state of human existence. At the same time, it translates the actual politics of Sri Lanka's war into the Deleuzian idiom of the "war machine." For, according to Deleuze and Guattari, armed conflict functions outside the control and accountability of the "state apparatus...prior to its laws" (1987, 352), and beyond its initial causes. Although such an interpretation of Sri Lanka's war reflects what the political scientist Jayadeva Uyangoda calls the "intractability of the Sri Lankan crisis" (1999, 158), its political and ethical stakes outweigh its gains.⁶

To begin with, the novel's leitmotif of "perpetual war" situates Sri Lanka's conflict within a general context of global war, because, as the narrator reports, it is fought with "modern weaponry," supported by "backers on the sidelines in safe countries," and "sponsored by gun-and drug-runners" (Ondaatje 2000, 43). In this scenario, the rule of law has deteriorated into "a belief in...revenge" (ibid., 56), and the state is either absent or part of the country's all-consuming anarchy of violence. This absence suggests that the state no longer functions, in Max Weber's famous words, as "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory" (2002, 13). It is of course possible to argue that the novel's critique of the Sri Lankan nation-state lies in its absence. It seems to me, however, that the narrative's tendency to locate the dynamics of Sri Lanka's war outside the state and within a post-national vision of a new global order generates a normative narrative of global war. On the one hand, it resonates with the popular — though misleading — notion that the "appearance of 'failed states'," as Samuel Huntington argues in his controversial study *The Clash of Civilizations*, intensifies "tribal, ethnic, and religious conflict" and thus "contributes to [the] image of a world in anarchy" (1996, 35). On the other, situating Sri Lanka's war outside the institutions of the state re-inscribes a Hobbesian notion of violence that helps legitimize and cultivate structural violence as a permissive way of conducting politics. Such a reading of violence, however, overlooks that in a global context violence has become "profoundly anti-Hobbesian" (Balibar 2001, xi). Balibar usefully suggests that the twentieth century history of extreme violence has made it impossible to regard violence as "a structural condition that precedes institutions." Instead, he maintains, "we have had to accept...that extreme violence is not post-historical but actually post-institutional." It "arises from institutions as much as it arises against them" (ibid., xi). Thus, in such popular post-colonial narratives of war as *Anil's Ghost*, the normalization of violence figures as a forgetting of the institutional entrenchment and historical use of violence as a state-sanctioned political practice.

If Ondaatje's novel presents Sri Lanka's war as an "inherently violent" event (Das 1998), it is also an event narrated through the symbolism and logic of archaic primitivism. For example, in the novel's central passage on the nature of human violence, the narrator observes, "The most precisely recorded moments of history lay adjacent to the extreme actions of nature or civilisation ...Tectonic slips and brutal human violence provided random time-capsules of unhistorical lives...A dog in Pompeii. A gardener in Hiroshima" (Ondaatje 2002, 55). The symbolic leveling of the arbitrariness of primordial chaos and the apparently ahistorical anarchism of violence create a rhetoric of the archaic that is characteristic, as Nancy argues, of "anything that is properly to be called war" (2000, 128). He convincingly argues that archaic symbolism "indicates that [war] escapes from being part of 'history' understood as the progress of a linear/or cumulative time" and can be rearticulated as no more than a "regrettable" remnant of an earlier age (ibid., 128). In that, Nancy's observation coincides with Hardt

and Negri's that the "war on terror" employs a medievalist rhetoric of just and unjust wars that moralizes rather than legitimizes the use of global violence by putting it outside the realm of reason and critique. In Nancy's observation, however, two things are at stake. First, what initially appears to be a postmodern critique of the *grand narratives* of history in fact demonstrates that a non-linear account of history may lend itself to the transformation of extreme violence into exceptional events. In this way violence is normalized as a transhistorical category that fails to address the unequal political and economic relations of power, which lie at the heart of global wars.

Second, Nancy rightly warns us against treating war as an archaic relic that is "tendentiously effaced in the progress and project of a global humanity" (2000, 128). For not only does war return in the process of negotiating sovereignty on a global and local plane, but the representation of war in terms of archaic images also repeats a primordialist explanation of what are structurally new wars. As theorists such as Appadurai and Kaldor have argued, the primordialist hypothesis of global wars merely reinforces those mass mediated images of global violence that dramatize ethnic wars as pre-modern, tribalist forms of strife. Huntington's notion of civilization or "fault-line" wars as communal conflicts born out of the break-up of earlier political formations, demographic changes, and the collision of mutually exclusive religions and civilizations presents the most prominent and politically influential version of a primordialist and bipolar conceptualization of global war. In contrast to Huntington's approach, however, the narrative of *Anil's Ghost* contends that all forms of violence "have come into their comparison" (Ondaatje 2000, 203). Notwithstanding its universalizing impetus, the novel thus insists on the impossibility to think the nation and a new global order outside the technologies of violence and modernity. Indeed, in the novel's narrative it is the suffering of all war victims that "has come into their comparison" and suggests that the new wars breed a culture of violence that shapes everyone's life yet for which no one appears to be accountable. On the one hand, then, the novel's self-critical humanitarian project seeks to initiate a communal and individual process of mourning by naming, and therefore accounting for, in Anil's words, "the unhistorical dead" (ibid, 56). On the other hand, read as its critical investment in the war's politics of complicity, the novel's humanitarian endeavor is countered by the narrator's tendency to articulate violence in archaic and anarchistic terms. For, to revert to the symbolic language of "primitivism and anarchy" and "to treat [the new wars] as natural disasters," as Kaldor observes (2001, 113), designates a common way of dealing with them. Thus the rhetoric of the archaic not merely dehistoricizes violence but contributes to the making of a normative and popular imaginary through which to make global wars thinkable and comprehensible. Thus, their violent excesses appear to be rooted in primordialist constructions of the failed post-colonial nation-state rather than a phenomenon with deep-seated roots in the global histories of the present. Such a normative imaginary of global war is produced for the Global North so as to dehistoricize its own position in the various colonial processes of nation formation and global economic restructuring of the Global South. In this way, as Ondaatje's novel equally demonstrates, the Global North can detach itself from the Global South and create the kind of historical and cultural distance needed to accept ultra-objective violence as a normative state of existence.

Conceptualizing war as a phenomenon of criminal and anarchistic violence, however, may do more than merely conform to the popular imagination about the chaotic and untamable nature of contemporary warfare. Indeed, anarchistic notions of violence tend to compress the grand narratives and *petite recits* of history into a total, singular present of perpetual uncertainty, fear, and political confusion and generate what the post-colonial anthropologist David Scott sees as Sri Lanka's "dehistoricized" history. Given the important role the claiming of ancient Sinhalese and Hindu history played in the violent identity politics that drive Sri Lanka's war, Scott suggests that devaluing or dehistoricizing history as a founding category of Sri Lanka's narrative of the nation breaks the

presumably "natural...link between past identities and the legitimacy of present political claims" (1999, 103). This strategy seems useful because it uncouples Sri Lanka's colonially shaped and glorified Sinhalese past from its present claims to political power. We need to note, however, that, according to Scott, dehistoricizing the past does not suggest writing from a historical vacuum. Rather, it refers to a process of denaturalizing and, thus, de-legitimizing the normative narratives of ethnicized and racialized narratives of national identity.

Anil's Ghost engages in this process of "dehistoricizing" by foregrounding the fictitious and fragmented, the elusive and ephemeral character of history. Indeed, as the historian Antoinette Burton suggests, the novel offers "a reflection on the continued possibility of History itself as an exclusively western epistemological form" (2003, 40). The latter clearly finds expression in what Sarath's brother, Gamini, condemns as "the last two hundred years of Western political writing" (Ondaatje 2000, 285). Steeped in the imperial project of the West, such writing is facilitated by and serves to erase the figure of the non-European cultural Other in order to produce and maintain what Jacques Derrida famously called the "white mythology" (1982, 207) of Western metaphysics. The novel usefully extends its reading of violence into a related critique of knowledge production, so that the latter becomes legible as being complicit in the production of perpetual violence and war. This critique is perhaps most articulated through the character of Palipana, Sarath's teacher and Sri Lanka's formerly renowned but now fallen anthropologist. Once an agent of Sri Lanka's anti-colonial liberation movement, Palipana represents the generation of cultural nationalist who sought history and national identity in an essentially Sinhalese culture and natural environment. Rather than employing empirical and colonial methods of knowledge production and historiography, Palipana had left the path of scientific objectivity, tinkered with translations of historical texts, and "approached runes...with the pragmatic awareness of locally inherited skills" (Ondaatje 2000, 82) until "the unprovable truth emerged" (ibid., 83). Now, years after his fall from scientific grace, Palipana lives the life of an ascetic, following the "strict principles of" a "sixth-century sect of monks" (ibid., 84). To him, history and nature have become one, for "all history was filled with sunlight, every hollow was filled with rain" (ibid., 84). Yet, Ondaatje's construction of Palipana and his account of the eye-painting ritual of a Buddha statue — a ritual that assumes a central place in the novel's cosmopolitan vision of artisanship as a practice of cultural and religious syncretism in the service of post-conflict community building — are themselves built on a number of historical texts listed in the novel's "Acknowledgment" section. As Antoinette Burton astutely observes, "the orientalism of some of the texts on Ondaatje's list is astonishing, a phenomenon which suggests the ongoing suppleness of 'history' as an instrument of political critique and ideological intervention" (2003, 50). Rather than effectively "dehistoricizing" the character of Palipana, then, Ondaatje bases this character and the eye-painting ceremony on a central Sri Lankan modernist text, Ananada K. Coomaraswamy's *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* (1908/1956).

Before I discuss Palipana and the eye-painting ceremony in more detail, however, it is necessary to look at how Sinhalese Buddhism reinvented itself as a revivalist movement in response to Western colonization and Christianization. As an anti-colonialist movement, it sought to restore Buddhism, as well as Sinhalese culture and language, to its past status. Initially, the program of its modern founder, Anagarika Dharmapala, served the social and economic empowerment of the rural population and redefined both Sri Lankan modernity and the social role of the monk. In its political practice, as H. L. Seneviratne argues in his study, *The Work of Kings. The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka*, the Dharmapalite project represented a modern "pragmatic nationalism" (1999, 128), legitimized by three arguments. First, the island's founding chronicles, specifically the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa*, provided the model for an ideal, pre-colonial Sinhalese Buddhist society. In the past, these mytho-historiographical texts guaranteed Sinhalese dominance and the political protection of

Buddhism's divine authority over the entire island. Today, the chronicles, as Stanely Tambiah suggests in his landmark study, *Buddhism Betrayed?*, serve "as fetishes imbued with power and...special ethnic entitlement" (1992, 58). Second, Dharmapala's economic program was equally modeled on an idealized, pre-colonial image of Sri Lankan rural life organized around the irrigation tank, the rice field, and the temple. To suit its rational agenda and strict work ethics, the program opposed folk rituals and revived traditional, rural craftsmanship. Influenced by British notions of the Sylvan village, it envisioned an idyllic and organic rural society reminiscent of what Raymond Williams describes as the nostalgia for a pre-capitalist and "knowable community" (1973, 165). Third, through its cosmopolitan stance, Dharmapala's project was not restricted to national regeneration but embraced Buddhism's doctrinal and cultural syncretism. These three elements of the revivalist movement constitute the core of the cultural logic of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism. How, then, does this logic resurface in the novel's narrative of Palipana and the eye-painting ceremony?

In various ways, Palipana embodies the contradictions that mark Buddhism's self-betrayal. Similar to the Revivalists' emphasis on the truth claim of the chronicles, Palipana's early translation of fictional Pali texts served to "explain" the politics of the island's pre-colonial history. However, his quest for a single truth drawn from a triumphalist past eventually leads him to "betray ... the principles on which he had built his reputation" (Ondaatje 2000, 81-2). Twenty years later, Palipana has turned into an Oedipus-like figure who, equipped with potent sightlessness, is "governed only by the elements" (ibid., 84). In keeping with both Palipana's teaching and the novel's commitment to dehistoricize the present, Palipana's past has become a faded image. What remains, according to Palipana, is the "ascendancy of the idea" (ibid., 12). Although the narrative is careful not to articulate this idea in transcendental terms, it presents, at least in my mind, an important point of contention. For, it is the survival of the authority of an idea, its endowment with power, that produces both imperial and essentialist discourses of history. Palipana's legacy, therefore, is not, as the novel has it, a nameless rock carving but his advice to find Ananda, the descendent of a line of craftsmen who painted eyes. More importantly, it is Palipana's narrative of the eye-painting ceremony that supplies the novel's central metaphor and vision of local and global community building.

At first glance, Palipana's account seems to promise the rediscovery of "hidden histories," which, according to the narrator, would "alter the perspective and knowledge of earlier times" (Ondaatje 2000, 105). But such histories seldom emerge outside of dominant historiographies. In fact, the eye-painting ceremony Palipana describes and Ananda performs at the end of the novel draws from Coomaraswamy's monumental work *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*. With specific reference to this classical historical study of pre-colonial Sinhalese art and craftsmanship, Palipana explains that the ceremony has been "record[ed] since the ninth century" (ibid., 99) and must be conducted by "a professional artificer, the craftsman" (ibid., 97), who "brings to life sight and truth and presence" (ibid., 99). During the ceremony the artificer is not allowed to look directly at the eyes of the Buddha but must "turn his back to the statue" and "brush over his shoulder" while looking into a mirror (ibid., 99). Only after the eyes are set does the Buddha figure attain enlightenment and divine status. Apart from omitting, for perhaps obvious reasons, the ritual's traditional use of a scapegoat figure, Palipana presents a relatively faithful summary of Coomaraswamy's text. Yet, the narrative also leads us to assume that Coomaraswamy's and, by extension, the novel's representation of the eye-painting ceremony exists in a historical vacuum and possesses an almost singular authority.

In fact, the publication of Coomaraswamy's text as a limited edition of hand-printed copies in 1908 coincided with the rise of Buddhist revivalism. At the time, the study was designed to counter the "destruction of the organisation of state-craftsmen" under "British occupation." Against the "commercialism and irreligion" of the "modern West" (1908/1956, vi), the book celebrates Sri Lanka's

rural craftsmanship as an ancient form of religious and popular art. The prophetic and liberating function Coomaraswamy ascribes to artisans and their traditional work, I think, also underlies *Anil's Ghost's* faith in the transformative power of art. What the novel does not address are the ways in which Coomaraswamy's study and, specifically, his account of the eye-painting ceremony rely on the "words of the chronicle[s]." Like Dharmapala, Coomaraswamy envisions an ideal Sinhalese society in which "the king," as opposed to the "English governor," "[is] 'one with the religion and the people'" (ibid., 75). Indeed, as Seneviratne argues, Coomaraswamy's work "contributed to the idea of a noble peasantry living in idyllic harmony in its natural and social environment" (1999, 261). To a certain degree, the book influenced Dharmapala's rural project and, unknowingly, participated in the "construct[ion] of a distinctive Sinhala identity" (ibid., 261). Similarly, by giving primacy to the traditions of rural Sinhalese craftsmanship and popular Buddhist ritual, *Anil's Ghost* risks constructing Sri Lanka's present through the burden of its past.

In contrast to the Buddhist revivalists, however, Coomaraswamy emphasizes the religiously and culturally hybrid character of pre-colonial Sinhalese craftsmanship, a fact that may have influenced Ondaatje's use of his study. Coomaraswamy writes that the eye-painting ceremony "dates back to the time when Buddhism and Hinduism were more distinctly recognized as two aspects of one faith" (1908/1956, 71). This view, however, has not remained uncontested, and taking it at face value, as the novel appears to do, overlooks that culture and rituals change under the pressures of nation-formation and civil strife. For example, the anthropologist Richard Gombrich's account of an eye-painting ceremony, he attended in 1965, stresses fear and taboos as integral parts of the ritual. Contrary to Coomaraswamy, Gombrich insists, "the rite is the exclusive property of Sinhalese Buddhists" (1966, 27). To the monks, he writes, the ritual is "a picturesque tradition worth preserving" (ibid., 25) and provides the occasion for "an exposition of the [Buddhist] doctrine in a Great Pirit" (ibid., 29) and merit-making (ibid., 32). Accompanied by a display of Buddhist flags and the teaching of the Sinhala language, the ceremony has become a Sinhalized event and neutralized virtually all of its Hindu influences. According to Gombrich, the Gods addressed during the ritual "owe [their] position...solely to the tradition of canonical Theravada Buddhism" (ibid., 34). The performance of the ritual in exclusively Sinhalese Buddhist terms indicates the political dominance Sinhala Buddhism gained through the 1956 elections and the thwarted Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact. A close reading of *Anil's Ghost's* intertextual layers, then, elucidates the ways in which the narrative gives new currency to Buddhist folk ritual and Sri Lanka's classical arts and crafts — Palipana's surviving idea — while detracting from their discursive volatility. At most, then, the novel's crucial attempt at dehistoricizing the past risks producing, as Tambiah puts it, "grave distort[ions]" by not "account[ing for] the political direction and transformation taken by Buddhism" in Sri Lanka (1992, 93).⁷ At the least, however, the novel's "critique of History," in Burton's perceptive judgment, "ends up being a re-inscription of western civilization's long romance with it...and hardly the kind of 'dehistoricizing' of history or provincializing of European forms that Palipana's fellow-travellers in the contemporary academy have been calling for" (2003, 50-51). Critical post-colonial reading practices of global civil war, then, need to track the dangers that reside in normalizing and "dehistoricizing" seemingly anarchic formations and archaic articulations of global civil war. Such readings need to draw out the ways in which earlier and no less violent modernities remain connected with our global modernity's various configurations of war. The next section examines how we might begin to articulate a post-colonial critique of global civil war by thinking the notion of the state of exception through post-colonial approaches to the notion of emergency.

Global Civil War and the State of Exception

If one of global civil war's horizons is American security politics, then, as Hardt and Negri observe,

only two forms of violence exist, namely that which "preserves the contemporary hierarchy of global order and violence" and that which "threatens that order" (2004, 32). Such a reading of unequal wars is certainly confirmed by *Anil's Ghost's* condemning portrayal of political neglect exercised over Sri Lanka by the Global North. Except for a few cursory references to wars in the Global South, then, wars such as Sri Lanka's and Rwanda's war and genocide also fall outside the purview of Hardt and Negri's analysis. The reason for this omission is the authors' separation of the post-colonial nation from the production of global war and violence. Hardt and Negri, however, make their claim by arguing that contemporary warfare has become the basis of politics and generated new legal structures, a phenomenon, which, at least in my view, presents less of a rupture than a continuity with the practices of WW II and liberation and neo-colonial civil wars. In contrast to Benjamin's observation that the "lawmaking" and the "law-preserving function" of violence are "means of legal ends" (1978, 284), the regulatory or law-giving forces of global civil war are anti-democratic and oppose the "constituent power" of the "modern revolutionary wars" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 22). Rather than producing nation-states from within the national liberation struggle of the people, global civil war invents nations from without, that is, imposes new regimes on embattled territory to facilitate the extraction of resources and consolidate its hegemonic geopolitics. This kind of nation building not only mimics imperial and colonial processes of nation formation but it also resembles "the battles over redrawing electoral or administrative districts in order to gain control, cast now...on a global scale" (ibid., 23). Thus, by way of generalization, Hardt and Negri conclude that "the nation has become something purely contingent, fortuitous, or...accidental" (ibid., 23).

Given the present situation in Iraq, Hardt and Negri's assessment seems appropriate, yet what their analysis underestimates is that global civil war tends to impose new national regimes in territories that have a post-colonial history of nation formation and, thus, encounters a considerable degree of resistance. Along with Pheng Cheah's (2003) investigation of the spectral survival of the post-colonial nation-state in people's imaginary and everyday life, I suggest that this kind of resistance emanates from popular and performative, rather than regulatory, forms of nation formation in post-colonial space. On the one hand, then, Hardt and Negri's exclusive reading of the nation-state as the administrative extension of global civil war rules out the politically and culturally productive dimensions of nation formation and, as Zygmunt Bauman argues, "puts" the nation "outside the realm of deliberate, purposeful and potentially rational action" (1998, 56). On the other hand, and more importantly, their assessment overlooks that while the post-colonial nation-state might be in ruins and degenerated into functioning as the handmaiden of uneven globalization and superimposed processes of regime change, it is also, as Cheah maintains, the "specter that haunts global capital and awaits reincarnation, the undecidable neuralgic point that refuses to be exorcised" (2003, 395). Thus, given that the post-colonial nation-state is, in Cheah's words, itself a "creature of life-death" (ibid., 394) and deeply involved in the necropolitics of global war, it also embodies — as Fanon already knew — the site where "culture as freedom is persistently performed and undone in radical postcolonial nationalist *Bildung*" (Cheah 2003, 394). For this reason, a critique of global violence needs to address both those wars which, according to Hardt and Negri, neither preserve nor threaten the present global order and the ways in which regulatory forms of transnational nation-formation remain haunted by the as of yet unrealized promise of decolonization and of popular national movements for social justice.

The question of the nation implicitly returns in Hardt and Negri's discourse of exception as an explanatory model for today's permanent state of global war, revealing the difficulty to speak about the global in terms other than its localizing impetus. According to them, the relationship between war and the state of exception can no longer be analyzed through an instrumentalist understanding as, for example, put forward by Clausewitz, whereby the state of exception becomes a temporary measure

to ward off danger and pursue politics by other means. If in the early twentieth century war designated a time of exception, during which the suspension of the rule of law had already become a stable feature lasting over decades in, for example, Nazi Germany, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Hardt and Negri write, war, as "the state of exception has become permanent and general" (2004, 7). This, of course, is an argument Benjamin advanced in 1940 in the eighth thesis of his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" to describe the position of those who suffered colonial and fascist oppression. I will get back to this point in a moment. For now, I wish to address Hardt and Negri's second and, as I believe, more ambiguous articulation of exception. The "state of exception," they argue, needs to be linked to "the exceptionalism of the United States" (2004, 8) to foreground the moral double standard by which the United States legitimates global warfare while refusing to be held accountable for it. This argument is in keeping with David Harvey's pivotal observation that, in the past, the United States "sought to conceal imperial ambition in an abstract universalism" (2003, 50). More specifically, the United States' historical and foundational ethical exceptionalism makes the United States the global champion of democracy and human rights — rather than the outright conqueror of foreign territories — while, at the same time, it allows the country to exempt itself from international law and accountability. As Hardt and Negri rightly surmise, the "exceptional role of the United States in the global state of exception serves only to eclipse and erode the republican tradition that runs through the nation's history" (2004, 9). It seems then that, not unlike dominant forms of multicultural cosmopolitanism, as Brennan argues in his essay "Cosmo-Theory" (2001), global civil war is actually a national phenomenon. But the rhetoric of exceptionalism creates a sense of global universalism that covers over the locally produced and exported theaters of war.

For Hardt and Negri, then, the state of exception functions as the universal condition and legitimization of global civil war, while positioning the United States as a global power, which transforms war "into the primary organizing principle of society" (2004, 12). They rightly observe that the state of exception blurs the boundaries between peace and war, violence and mediation. Yet, curiously enough, Hardt and Negri's understanding of the state of exception largely emphasizes the concept's regulatory and pragmatic politics, so that the United States emerges as a sovereign power on grounds of its ability to decide on the state of exception. By exempting itself from international law and courts of law, protecting its military from being subjected to international control, allowing preemptive strikes, and engaging in torture and illegal detention (*ibid.*, 8), the United States instrumentalizes and maintains war as a state of exception in the name of global security and thus seeks to consolidate its hegemonic role within Empire. Although Hardt and Negri openly disagree with Agamben's reading of the state of exception as defining "power itself as a 'monopoly of violence' " (2004, 364), it seems to me that Agamben's theory of the state of exception, as put forward in *Homo Sacer* rather than in *States of Exception*, might be usefully read alongside Hardt and Negri's crucial claim that global civil war as well as resistance movements depend on the "production of subjectivity" through immaterial labour (2000, 66). What this argument overlooks is that, according to Agamben, the state of exception constitutes an abject space or "a zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion" (1998, 181), where subjectivity enters a political and legal order solely on grounds of its exclusion. Moreover, the sovereign — albeit a nation, sovereign power, or global network of power — can only transform the rule of law into the force of law by suspending the legal system from a position that is simultaneously inside and outside the law. Through these mechanisms of exclusion and contradiction, subjectivity is not so much created as it is deprived of its social and political relationships. Thus the "originary activity" of global civil war is the violent conflation of political and social relationship and thereby the "production of bare life" (*ibid.*, 83), of life that need not be accounted for, as is the case with the civilian casualties of the US-led war against Iraq. The state of exception, however, also figures as a prominent concept in post-colonial theory, for it raises questions not only about the ways in which we configure the human but also how we understand imperial or

global war.

In 1940, Benjamin famously wrote, "the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight" (1968, 257). Benjamin's statement, as Homi Bhabha reminds us half a century later in his essay "Interrogating Identity," can be usefully advanced for a critical analysis of the dialectical — if not revolutionary — relationship between oppression, violence, and anti-colonial historiography. Indeed, "the state of emergency," as Bhabha says, "is also always a state of emergence" (1994, 41). Read in the context of today's global state of exception, namely the recurrence and intensification of ethnic civil wars across the globe and the coincidence of democratic and totalitarian forms of political rule, Bhabha's statement entails a number of risks and suggestions for a post-colonial historiography of global civil war.

First, Bhabha's notion of emergency/emergence reflects his critical reading of Fanon's vision of national identity and thus reconsiders the state of emergency as a possible site of "the occult instability where the people dwell" (Fanon 1963, 227) and give birth to popular movements of national liberation. In this context, the state of exception might be understood as both constitutive to the alienation that is intrinsic to liberation movements and instrumental for a radical euphoria and excessive hope that create and spectralize the post-colonial nation-state as a deferred promise of decolonization. It is through this perspective that we can critically evaluate Hardt and Negri's endorsement of what they call "democratic violence" (2004, 344). This kind of violence, they argue, belongs to the multitude. It is neither creative nor revolutionary but used on political rather than moral grounds. When organized horizontally, according to democratic principles of decision making, democratic violence serves as a means of defending "the accomplishments" of "political and social transformation" (ibid., 344). Notwithstanding the concept's romantic and utopian inflections, democratic violence also derives from Hardt and Negri's earlier argument that "the great wars of liberation are (or should be) oriented ultimately toward a 'war against war,' that is, an active effort to destroy the regime of violence that perpetuates our state of war and supports the systems of inequality and oppression." This, they conclude, is "a condition necessary for realizing the democracy of the multitude" (ibid., 67). In one quick stroke, Hardt and Negri move anti-colonial liberation wars into their post-national paradigm of Empire and divest them of their cultural and historical particularities. Moreover, translating explicitly national liberation movements into a universalizing narrative of global pacifism precludes a critique of violence within its particular historical and philosophical formation. In contrast, a post-colonial analysis of global war must tease out the intersections between the ways in which racialized violence constitutes colonial and post-colonial processes of nation formation and helps construct an absolute enemy through which to legitimize global war and to abdicate responsibility for the dehumanizing effects of global economic restructuring.

Second, while Bhabha's pun is symptomatic of the resisting properties that he sees as operative in the various practices of colonial ambiguity, it also, despite Benjamin's opinion, draws attention to the possibility that oppression alters the linear flow of Western history and challenges "the transparency of social reality, as a pre-given image of human knowledge" (Bhabha 1994, 41). Here, Bhabha rightfully asks to what extent do states of emergency or acts of extreme violence constitute a historical rupture and, more importantly, call into question the nature of the human subject. It is at this point that a post-colonial reading of the state of exception fruitfully coincides with Agamben's notion of exception. For in both cases, the focus of inquiry is the construction of disposable life through the logic of necropower and the collapse of social and political relationships that enable the exercise of particularly racialized forms of violence, including torture and disappearances.

Third, Bhabha's notion of the double movement of emergency and emergence envisions an anti-colonialist historiography in terms of a dialectical process of perpetual transformation. It is at this point, however, that the coupling of emergency or exception and emergence becomes problematic for at least two reasons. First, combining both terms prematurely translates the violence of the political event into that of metaphor and risks erasing the micro- or quotidian narratives of violence — such as Arasanayagam's account of war — that both legitimate and are perpetuated by political and social states of emergency. In order to examine the relationship between global and communal forms of violence, a critical practice of post-colonial studies, I suggest, must reassess the term "transformation" and, concurrently, the assumption that acts of extreme global violence can be advanced in the service of "making history" (Balibar 2001, 26). In other words, if, as Hannah Arendt argues, there has been a historical "reluctance to deal with violence as a separate phenomenon in its own right" (2002, 25), it is time to examine the possibility of employing post-colonial studies in the service of a non-dialectical critique of global war. This kind of critique must ask to what extent those on whose bodies extreme violence was exercised are a priori excluded from articulating any transformative theory of violence. How, in other words, does bare life — if at all possible — attain the status of subjectivity within the dehumanizing logic of exception or global civil war?

Fourth, like Bhabha, we need to take seriously Benjamin's insight into the intrinsic relationship between violence and the conceptualization of history. Notwithstanding Bhabha's pivotal argument that the violence of a "unitary notion of history" generates a "unitary," and therefore extremely violent, "concept of man" (1994, 42), I wish to caution, alongside Benjamin's analysis of fascism, that what enables today's global civil war is that even "its opponents treat it as a historical norm" (Benjamin 1968, 257). What is at stake, then, in dominant as well as critical narratives of global civil war is their representation as natural rather than political phenomena, and the acceptance of globalization as a political *fait accompli*. Both of these aspects, I believe, contribute to the proliferation of dehistoricized concepts of the global increase of racialized violence and war. It seems to me, however, that the enormous rise of violence inflicted by global civil wars requires a post-colonial historiography and critique of global war that questions notions of history based on cultural fragmentation, rupture, and totalization. Instead, such a historiography must seek out patterns of connection and connectivity. But more importantly, as I have argued in this paper, it must trace the post-colonial moment of global civil war and begin to read contemporary war through the interconnected necropolitics of global and imperial warfare. Thus, to understand the logic and practice of global war we need to develop a greater understanding precisely of those civil wars and national liberation wars that do not appear to threaten the new global order. Furthermore, a post-colonial critique of global civil war should facilitate the decoding and rescripting of both the normalizing narratives and racialized embodiment of global civil warfare.

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Notes

1. For a critical assessment of the immanent logic of Empire, see (Arrighi 2003) and (Laclau 2004).
2. On rogue states, see (Derrida 2005) and Nyers (forthcoming).
3. This section is not designed to give an overview of the ways in which post-colonial scholars have engaged with global violence. Indeed, post-colonial studies is premised on a critique of imperial and, thus, global forms of violence. Numerous scholars from Frantz Fanon to Edward Said, from Gayatri Spivak and Veena Das to Sara Suleri have produced an enormous body of critical work on the logic and operative modes of colonial and imperial violence. This body needs to be reassessed in light of a more detailed conceptualization of the relationship between post-colonial studies and global civil war than I can do it here. The present section merely seeks to point at some, but as of yet, unexplored points of intersection between postcolonial and globalization studies. In short, I argue that while post-colonial studies has engaged with questions of global violence, it has not expanded this discussion toward questions of global warfare. A post-colonial reading of global civil war, I suggest, also seeks to counter Hardt and Negri's argument that post-colonial studies is a revisionary discipline engaged in colonial discourse analysis but bereft of critical tools for the analysis of contemporary configurations of globalization.
4. Both Hardt and Negri's biopolitical reading of global civil war and Mbembe's notion of "necropolitics" are indebted to Michel Foucault's concept of biopower. It seems to me, however, that

Hardt and Negri rely on Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1988), which largely omits the question of race from its discourse on biopolitics. In contrast, Mbembe appears to draw from and expand Foucault's lecture series "*Society Must Be Defended*," in which he examines the modalities of power that regulate death or, as he puts it, "make live and let die" (2003, 247). Most importantly, Foucault argues that the "power of death" can be exercised only through the systemic application of racism. Indeed, "racism," he argues, "is the indispensable precondition that allows someone to be killed, that allows others to be killed" (2003, 256). Mbembe, then, transfers Foucault's argument into colonial space, a move, as Ann Stoler (1995) suggests, that is painfully absent from Foucault's work, and by shifting geo-historical context of biopolitics, the epistemological focus equally moves from life to death. It is thus that Hardt and Negri and Mbembe employ Foucault to substantially different ends and effects.

5. Agamben's notion of *homo sacer* and Patterson's much earlier conception of the slave's condition of social death intersect on various planes, which I can only mention but not analyze in the context of this paper. Given that Agamben refrains from reading *homo sacer* through a notion of modernity that takes the rise and logic of slavery as one of its crucial determinants, a comparative reading of Patterson and Agamben seems urgently needed. What seems of specific interest is that Patterson argues, not unlike Agamben, that white sovereignty comes into being only by "institutionalizing marginality, the liminal state of social death" of the slave (1982, 46). Thus, being at once outside and inside the social order of white sovereignty, the slave assumes the position of *homo sacer* and finds herself instrumental to the production of white sovereignty. In other words, Patterson provides us with a critique of institutionalized racism and racialized abjection as they generate and reproduce the figure of *homo sacer*.

6. For a reading of the ways in which exclusionary and colonially received politics of race and class orchestrate Sri Lanka's war, see (Sivanandan 1990).

7. This statement needs to be modified in light of Marlene Goldman's (2004) excellent essay on the representations of Buddhism in *Anil's Ghost*. While I realize that the novel includes brief accounts of the ways in which monks have been involved in assassinations, I do, nevertheless, insist that the novel does not sufficiently engage with the cultural and aesthetic logic of Buddhist revivalism and its various contributions to the violent polarizations of the Tamil minority and Sinhalese majority, the JVP movement, and the military and paramilitary forces of the Sri Lankan government.