Maclean tease out the many paradoxes that shaped revolutionary politics including 'the non-violent and violent; and the liberal and revolutionary strands,' as well as the simultaneous visibility and invisibility of the revolutionaries, then and now. In turn, he flags how both *Gentlemanly Terrorists* and *A Revolutionary History* utilize understudied archives, including the accounts of women and visual sources, to rethink India's independence movement. De draws out how the threat of revolutionary violence for British officials, alongside its appeal for some Indians, sometimes had a greater impact than the actions of the revolutionaries. De productively challenges historians to 're-provincialize' the revolutionaries in order to better understand 'what makes Punjab and Bengal particularly fertile grounds for revolutionary activity.'

Finally, in the fifth review essay, Michael Silvestri skillfully places the two books in the wider landscape of British imperial historiography, especially ongoing discussions over the impact of 'resistance and dissent' in reconceptualizing the British empire. Silvestri frames Ghosh and Maclean's recent monographs as destabilizing an older historiography of revolutionary violence in India as a story of failure. In its place, Silvestri demonstrates that these revolutionaries were adept at revealing the ideological fissures in the empire that they opposed. Silvestri argues that specific counter-terrorism tactics developed in interwar India shaped global patterns of state surveillance and violence in the following decades. In conclusion, he challenges historians of the British empire to build on Ghosh and Maclean's monographs to forge a better framework for integrating 'popular reception, revolutionary self-perceptions and the responses of the colonial state.'

In their responses to the five review essays, Ghosh and Maclean connect the anticipated futures of the revolutionaries in interwar India to the challenges of writing histories of revolutionary violence in the present. In her response, Ghosh situates *Gentlemanly Terrorists* both within a 'revolutionary turn' in South Asian studies and in conversation with a multi-generational body of scholarship on liberalism in the British Empire. In her response, Maclean generously places the development of *A Revolutionary History* in the context of wide-ranging interdisciplinary exchanges, while also encouraging scholars in the present to develop 'a more dynamic model of violence in colonial contexts.' Engaging the five reviewers, both Maclean and Ghosh propose new avenues for scholarship on revolutionaries that cross over into the post-colonial era. Likewise, they encourage the growing body of scholarly work on imperial anxieties to fully address the insecurities of the British empire's revolutionary opponents and 'how deeply damaging colonial occupation was for the colonized,' in Ghosh's compelling formulation.

What we talk about when we talk about revolutionaries

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Kama Maclean's *Revolutionary History* and Durba Ghosh's *Gentlemanly Terrorists* confront and provoke three interrelated challenges to scholarship on anticolonialism. Those are, briefly put: questions of evidence, questions of history, and questions of commitment. Taken together, I think these concerns offer us new protocols for approaching our work.

I. 'to recognize "how it really was"'[1]

To offer a history of revolutionary anticolonialism is to offer a history of evidence: to reveal how we arrive at what qualifies as evidence, corroboration, and proof. Of course, this has been one of the central driving questions of South Asian history and postcolonial theory, but these books mark a crucial moment in South Asian historiography, when we can no longer afford to simply 'ignore,' 'distrust,' 'read against,' or 'critique' the colonial archive. The imperial state and its records (then and now) have consistently forced its subjects to engage with them, and the relationship between

colonial surveillance and anticolonial action has always been one of negotiation and interplay, not simply negation and suppression.[2]

The interwar period is especially murky, marked not only by a self-conscious rupture from its own demarcated past, but also its erasure and foreclosure by World War II, decolonization, and the Cold War. In most cases, the archives we possess of revolutionary activism from this period are incomplete or missing altogether; in the best of cases, we possess revolutionary and bureaucratic documents that are purposefully unintelligible. The subjects of this moment thought and operated in political vocabularies often foreign to the ones we use today, even though the words might have remained the same. This is why it has been so necessary to offer genealogies, as Maclean and Ghosh do, of terms like 'revolutionary' and 'terrorism' that both clearly relate to their present use but are not synonymous with them. Briefly, these also include, from other scholars working closely with Maclean and Ghosh: 'love,' 'atheism,' 'youth,' and, of course, 'violence.'[3]

'Revolutionary' is an especially difficult term, forged in a sometimes playful and sometimes hostile relationship with British surveillance, Indian moderates, and international supporters. It is an identification with French, Russian, and Irish histories, but its proud recuperation was made possible by the illicit circulation of *Political Trouble in India* and the Rowlatt Report.[4] As Ghosh shows, the British (and then postcolonial Indian) category of 'terrorism' was a justification, in advance, of state-sanctioned violence. Moreover, 'terrorism' names a prediction of future action which *only* creates and enforces its own corroboration.

We have tended to replicate this logic even while claiming to distrust the colonial archive. We understand an action to be 'revolutionary' or 'terrorist' only when it has been predicted or determined to be so by the British Raj.[5] The revolutionaries themselves were doing plenty of things *they* deemed revolutionary but which were not among the Raj's predictions: reading, transforming the jail into an ashram, watching movies, and experimenting with studio portraiture.[6] This is why Ghosh's revolutionary terrorists are also gentleman; this is why Maclean's moderate Congress Party is also, covertly, revolutionary. That a *badhralok* could also be a *badmaash* is at the heart of both colonial confusion and anticolonial strategy.

Historians otherwise sympathetic to the revolutionary cause have preferred to omit ambiguity rather than render beguilement central to the anticolonial project. Maclean's expansive archive pushes us closer to a better protocol. By taking iconography and oral histories as corroborative evidence, she reveals social practices, modes of circulation, and moments of affiliation that have been brushed off as confusing or unreliable. As Maclean notes in a recent essay, the desire for a narrowly construed corroboration haunts and potentially undermines the historian's ability to reinvestigate the past 'as it really happened.'[7] Revolutionary anticolonial agitators and their sympathizers thought seriously about both publicity and secrecy, and, navigated these terrains with agility and sophistication.

A 'revolutionary history' in this sense might push us beyond mere corroboration. Revolution circulated first by rumor and second by manifesto – and then once again by whispers, rumors, boasts, and lies. Can a 'revolutionary history' be made to incorporate these acts, even at the risk of speculation and conjecture?

II. 'that which is fulfilled by the here-and-now'

The revolutionaries practiced, as both Maclean and Ghosh describe, a 'politics of impatience.' This stands as a direct response not only to the British Raj's alluring (and false) promise of a slow liberal lurch towards independence, but also against M.K. Gandhi's seemingly infinite 'experiments with truth' and his assertion of politics without guarantee.[8] This is why violence/non-violence is an improper axis along which to articulate the differences between the revolutionaries and their adversaries.

What 'violence' is, or what counts as 'violence,' was at the center of anticolonial debates in the 1920s. We cannot, therefore, cleanly associate the 'terrorists' or the 'revolutionaries' with the 'politics of impatience' solely on the basis of their affiliation with 'violence.' It is unclear, in most anticolonial writing, that 'violence' *per se* secures any particular timeframe for a desired event (independence, revolution, *satyagraha*). On the contrary, what seems particularly compelling about interwar radical anticolonial thought is that it operated in the absence of a promised outcome. *Inqilab zindabad* declares revolution for the perpetual present, a never-ending 'now.'[9] The 'cult of the bomb,' in its 1910 iteration, declares violence on the present in order to *revive* – not avenge – the past.

How can we imagine – as the revolutionaries and others suggest – impatience as not simply a demand for a result or an event, but rather a *politics onto itself*? That is, a revolutionary politics is revolutionary by virtue of its perpetual impatience. It is neither satisfied with the present (liberals) nor unsatisfied with the future (Gandhi). Instead, impatient politics is a constant and consistent demand for revolution – *inqilab zindabad* – and therefore in line with a total reformulation of an historical imagination.

III. 'to take control of a memory'

Commitment, Theodor Adorno writes, is a plea for a world that might, and *should*, be otherwise.[10] We have begun to take stock of the revolutionaries' commitments, and this project is far from over. But what are ours?[11]

A temptation to align our contemporary present with the interwar period looms over all of these projects. Presentism, that 'morally complacent and methodologically suspect' mode of analysis, has dogged the histography of anticolonialism since Indian and Pakistani independence.[12] If we are too eager to find clues about our own political moment from the colonial archive, we will miss the specificity of both. We can admit that we our political commitments are rooted in the present while nevertheless rigorously historicizing the subjects of our analysis.

And yet, the revolutionaries stump us again. There were no better presentists than the revolutionaries, for whom all of literature and history were up for the taking. Only under the HSRA's pen could Auguste Vaillant's anarchist declaration – 'it takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear' – refer to a smoke-bomb and a gunshot. No one but Bhagat Singh could watch *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1929 and decide it was required viewing for revolution. A proper commitment to a revolutionary history requires us to imagine the world otherwise: then and now. To historicize the revolutionaries requires us to embrace their presentism. To recuperate them for the present requires us to return to them the global vibrancy- and ambiguities- of their historical moment.

The futures past of anticolonial archives

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Though focused tightly on the interwar era, Maclean and Ghosh's monographs shed significant light on the afterlives of anticolonial violence in South Asia. This shared analytical intention is born of visions internal to the pasts they examine. As they argue, a proleptic politics, predicated on freedom in the future, became a ruling obsession for those who pursued violence against the Raj. Thus, between 1928 and 1931 in the Punjab, Bhagat Singh and his acolytes rooted their agitations and aspirations, in Maclean's felicitous phrase, in 'a politics of impatience.'[13] From 1919 to 1947 in Bengal, maintains Ghosh, *bhadralok dacoits* similarly pursued terror with imminent objectives in mind, 'most importantly, new futures.'[14]