Eric: Welcome back to *Decolonising Ideas*, an occasional podcast series from the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh.

Our first episode featured a conversation between Dr Ali Kassem and Dr Nadeen Dakkak about how their scholarship relates to practices and theories of decoloniality and broader issues of coloniality in the Arabic-speaking majority world. This episode complements that conversation, with the two reconnecting to discuss three questions surrounding decoloniality. What is the meaning of decoloniality? What do Ali and Nadeen recommend reading? And what art forms would they recommend relating to decoloniality? Please enjoy this bonus episode of *Decolonising Ideas*.

Ali: I think to wrap up, there were three questions that would be great to reflect on. And the first one is the meaning of decoloniality and what the decoloniality means.

Nadeen: Yes. So, I think even though we touched a lot on that, we can reflect perhaps from our own understanding. So, I see decoloniality as a process of constantly, like, questioning and interrogating our ideas and concepts that basically are a reflection of colonialism in the past, and its continued existence in our present, everyday life. And I think it's a process that we have to engage in not just academically, but also as people living, whether it's in a region like, and I'm going to put this in quotation marks, the ‘Arab world’ or in another place. So basically, it's a constant process of questioning in order to come to terms with the history of colonialism, which obviously continues to exist today in different forms.

Ali: Absolutely. That's obviously very similar to me. What I might say a bit more on that is that for me, this whole decolonial thing really is very much informed by Latin American decolonial thought and this idea that modernity is something that began with the colonisation of the Americas in 1492, which was this moment when these different things were happening, including things very relevant to the region, because sometimes that gets erased. We live in a Eurocentric modern world, and that really centers the epistemological so that we have these different categories. There are different forms of knowing the world and of engaging with the world and of being of the world that have long existed in different Indigenous communities across the world and in different civilizations and so on that have been erased systematically over the past 500 years.

And it's really this idea that while the one we have isn't really working: it's not delivering any of its promises and it's destroying the planet. So if we are to think of alternative modes of being and alternative knowledge, there's a lot that we can think alongside different indigenous communities and different civilizations that have long been saying “this isn't going to work and that this isn't working”. So for me, decoloniality is very much about reclaiming and re-legitimising the other forms of knowing the world and other forms of being in the world.

But it's also very much it is eventually a very structural thing and also a very material thing as well, because the way these knowledges get erased, how they have been erased and how they continue to be erased is very much material and very much structural. So that question is a major issue of, how can we have an alternative form of being in the world that doesn't do this? But again, absolutely what you're saying in terms of the legacies of empire and how it structures this and what possibilities are there.

And for me, what I would say is in terms of recommendations, if people are interested in reading more about this, obviously there are different things people might be interested in reading. So of course, there's the more academic stuff that particularly for me, the stuff that I find really insightful is mostly the stuff that is coming out of Latin American decolonial thought or the work of Walter Mignolo. He has a really good book called *The Darker Side of Austrian Modernity*, or even better than Mignolo, the work of Ramon Grosfoguel and Madina Tlostanova. Madina Tlostanova, she's not Latin American, but she's in conversation with that group very powerfully. But also, of course, we have the work of Gurminder Bhambra, and so on who've been having these different anti and decolonial conversations.

Academically, I think those are the most powerful spaces or sites to think through the decolonial. But of course, there's everything that exists within the academic or not. So the work of Frantz Fanon, for example, which is incredibly influential, which has been incredibly influential from my thinking. I don't know if Fanon would identify as having written academic texts and what that means. But if you ask me, if I need to read one book, I'd definitely be like ‘pick any Fanon books’ and make sure you read that. That's the most important thing you need to read.

Nadeen: And they are more accessible perhaps, than the academic books.

Ali: Yeah, absolutely. And beautifully written. And Fanon, he writes poetry. So it's really, really powerful. So I would say that. I don't know about you?

Nadeen: Yeah, I'm afraid I don't have a list of recommendations, like you, Ali, but I definitely like Fanon's work. The book I'm going to recommend is accessible to the general reader. So even if someone is... and it's about Bahrain, so it's relevant to people interested in the Gulf, but it's also very relevant if you're interested in how colonialism functioned by dividing populations. Again, the question of sectarianism and divisions. So this book really helped me think about these ideas in my own research. It's a good read as well. It's by Omar AlShehabi, who is a Bahraini scholar, and it's from 2019. It's called *Contested Modernity: Sectarianism, Nationalism and Colonialism in Bahrain*.

Basically, like I said, even though it's set in early 20th century Bahrain, it's very much relevant to thinking how Bahrain is a country that is often viewed through the lens of sectarianism that you mentioned is often very problematic. How that lens cannot be understood without looking back at those earlier. And this is pre-oil as well, right. It's before the discovery of oil in Bahrain. So, yeah, it's just perhaps a way of reading about the Gulf, but also in comparison with other regions that have been subjected to similar forms of colonial domination.

Ali: I just want to pick up on that and say that I find it very difficult to suggest something, to suggest readings that are from the region. And it's really interesting that I've always found Latin American decolonial thought much more generative, to think of the region than a lot of the stuff that's being written in the region. And I think that really kind of one of the things that we didn't talk about, but that's really relevant here is how the different parts of the global south relate to one another and how do they speak to one another, and what kind of conversations can we have between different parts of Asia, different parts of Africa, Latin America and also indigenous communities across the Americas and the knowledges that they have? And how can we think these? Because it's the same colonial structures that produced all of these spaces and that structured them throughout.

So how can we think of these different regions in relation to one another? I don't think it's super problematic for me to be centering Latin American stuff and thinking the region because I think, for example, Grosfoguel is probably much more generative. I've found it much more generous to think the region than a lot of... You know? But obviously that gets risky or the limitations of that would be to marginalise or erase the knowledge being created in the region because of course there is a lot and it's really powerful and really important as well and equally generative in many different ways. So the politics of that are interesting to think about and then maybe problematic in many different ways.

Last thing would be kind of something a bit wider. So art form. I don't know. Do you have thoughts on that?

Nadeen: Yeah. Actually, my suggestion of my one artistic response to decoloniality, it doesn't come from the region. Interestingly, it comes from Latin America! I'm hoping, you know, it. But I got introduced to the song because it's actually with a Palestinian singer. So the song is called *Somos Sur*, which means ‘us the south’. So basically it's by the French Chilean singer Ana Tijoux, and it's sang with a a British Palestinian rapper called Shadia Mansour. Again, this has nothing to do with the region that I work on. But obviously solidarity with the Palestinian cause is in that song. And the song is basically just about the solidarity of people from the global south, and it has so much energy. So if you listen or watch it, it just captures the solidarity of people from the global south against colonial domination, against capitalism, et cetera, et cetera. So that's my recommendation.

Ali: That's interesting because my more cultural recommendation is a bit more relevant to the region actually. And so I think two people and also it's also music, which is interesting, right? Because I think there's a lot that's been happening in terms of the music scene. And I think two people that have been really important for me in kind of thinking these things, whose music contains a lot is one, Lowkey, who's an Iraqi British but Iraqi musician. I don't want to call him rapper. He's also, you know, he's an activist and he has a lot of really, really good work, mostly about the region. So he has a really good song called *Ahmed*, where he reflects on the Mediterranean and the so-called refugee crisis, and that's in the Mediterranean. He also has another one called *The Sea* or something along those lines. He has a one called *The Terrorist* or *Terrorist?*. And he has all of this music that's very much about the region and that's very much engaging with the region, but that very much centers these questions of the colonial, the imperial eurocentrism and so on.

And another one is French. He does music in French, he's Kery James and he does a lot about Islamophobia in France and anti-Muslim racism in France but also questions more broadly about modernity. So it has a really, really powerful song called *Sans moi* which means ‘without me’ and it's basically saying that the system that is being put in place, it doesn't work for me. I'm not going to be a part of destroying the planet I'm not going to be a part of these pursuits that you're making me pursue. And his other really good one is called *Lettre a la Republique* which is ‘Letter to the Republic’ where he kind of speaks to France as a republic and what it means to him and what hasn't done to him, someone who has grown up there. He's black as well. He identifies as black Muslim.

So I think those are really powerful, those are two powerful musicians but I think there's a music scene that's out there that's been engaging with these questions for quite some time. It's really interesting to think it you might want to add that to your [work] looking at cultural production.

Nadeen: Yes! Thank you. It was a really nice chance to have a conversation with Ali.

Ali: Absolutely. Yeah. We touched on a lot. That was great.

Nadeen: Yeah. Lots of food for thought.

Ben: Thank you for listening to *Decolonising Ideas*, an occasional podcast series by the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh. We would like to thank Dr Ali Kassem and Dr Nadeen Dakkak for their incredible contributions to this episode, and offer a very special thank-you to Saber Bamatraf for composing and performing our fantastic intro music; you can find a link to his music in the episode description.

This series is produced by Dr Ben Fletcher-Watson.

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