Essays on Decoloniality: Volume 1

Ben Fletcher-Watson, Lesley McAra and Désha Osborne (eds.)

Essays on Decoloniality: Volume 1

This series of occasional papers is published by

The Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities

The University of Edinburgh

2 Hope Park Square

Edinburgh EH8 9NW

The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, with registration number SC00533

Essays on Decoloniality: Volume 1

Edited by Ben Fletcher-Watson, Lesley McAra and Désha Osborne

Series Editor: Désha Osborne

The Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities

The University of Edinburgh

2024

Acknowledgements

Contents

STEVEN YEARLEY

Foreword

I am delighted to be writing a foreword for this collection of papers arising from the first year of the IASH Institute Project on Decoloniality – or IPD '24 as we came to call it. I was appointed Director of IASH in 2017 with a view, among other things, to developing plans for celebrating IASH's fiftieth anniversary in the academic year 2019-20. An ambitious international virus had other ideas for the same year and, in the end, the kind of large-scale public programme that we had in mind could not be realised. But this setback gave the team at IASH an opportunity to reflect on the way to start the next half-century of the Institute's existence.

It turned out that both the Deputy Director (Dr Ben Fletcher-Watson) and I had been thinking along similar lines: that it would be timely and exciting for IASH to be encouraging and promoting work around decoloniality issues in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Ben's conception had been broad while mine was more around decoloniality and the Scottish Enlightenment. Taking advice from within the University (particularly from the RACE.ED group and the IASH Advisory Board) and beyond, we worked on devising an initiative for IASH as a whole to commit to an intensive focus on this topic. We persuaded many of our funders and backers to join us in setting aside funds specifically for Fellowships and activities for the Institute Project on Decoloniality from 2021-2024. In total, we secured from our own resources, from within the University and from outside backers, around £750,000 for the life of IPD '24, enabling us to assign around half our Fellowship positions to this project.

Once IASH had taken this initiative, it additionally became the home for a project being developed by the University Principal and his advisory group – now known as the Research and Engagement Working Group (REWG) on Engaging with the University of Edinburgh's Historical Links to African Enslavement and Colonialism and their Racial Legacies Today. Commencing in 2022, IASH hosts specific funded research fellowships under this scheme, with the post-holders known as 'University of Edinburgh's Historical Links to African Enslavement and Colonialism' Research Fellows.

The plan was for the Project to feature one main conference or event for each of the three intakes and for an IASH-published book each year. On top of this, there are to be plays and arts pieces, podcasts and lectures, and public activities at the Book and Science festivals in Edinburgh. We were thrilled from the outset with the enthusiasm of Fellows for the Institute Project and with the positive reception within the University community.

I write this just as the second year of IPD '24 has come to a close, delighted that so many international academics from the Project's first year – and from such a geographical and historical range – have prepared and revised essays based on their work on decoloniality at IASH. It is a source of happiness too that there are papers in this volume corresponding both to Ben's broad take on decoloniality and to my ideas on critical reflection on the Scottish Enlightenment.

This book is a record of the growth of the Institute, to be viewed as part of an intellectual journey across three years and three publications. As a community of practice, we are learning and trying to decentre whiteness. In a spirit of openness and honesty, we acknowledge that we will not get everything right, but we hope that the scholarship featured here helps us to continue conversations around race, decoloniality, inequality and associated issues for many years to come.

In this spirit, I hope you enjoy reading and considering these papers as much as we at IASH have benefited from our encounters with the IPD '24 Fellows. Our overall aim is that, through this book

and the next two volumes, IASH will have helped advance the scholarly work of our Fellows and contributed to the international understanding of issues around decoloniality in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

Professor Steven Yearley

IASH Director 2017-22

DÉSHA OSBORNE

Introduction

The papers presented in this volume represent some of the research undertaken during the first year of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities' Institute Project on Decoloniality (IPD), from August 2021 to July 2022. This first cohort of scholars came from varied backgrounds – some researchers with projects that continue to engage with decoloniality as both theory and praxis, while others arrived in Edinburgh ready to engage for the first time. For some scholars in the first cohort unaware of the long history of decoloniality, working at IASH presented a challenge to engage present and future projects either within their respective discipline or purposefully crossbreeding with adjacent fields of study. For each of the projects written about in the first volume, there was difficulty faced in knowing (in order to challenge) how the preoccupations inherent within any 'decoloniality project' requires a process of unlearning and unthinking the various centres that have hardened into epistemically violent frameworks. In this sense, decolonising involves knowledge exchange and production rooted in unlearning as part of the methodology. In many academic spaces, those colonial forms of knowledge repeatedly centre global north scholarship (in many cases by white scholars) where studies are done without either accountability or collaboration.

This volume emerges during a time when the discourse is undergoing a period of intense self-reflection around both decolonisation (as struggle and expectation) and decoloniality (as anticipation). It is this anticipation that existed in the works of

writers and scholars who lived in current or former colonised spaces beginning in the middle of the twentieth century. Those who research and teach and resist within anticolonial and later postcolonial studies will recognise the term in the works of writers from the African continent and its diasporas, South and Central America, and the Caribbean. Franz Fanon's construction involves both colonised and coloniser undergoing a repositioning that results in the colonised acknowledged as fully human. The practice and praxis of Kwame Nkrumah (see C.L.R. James's *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, 1977) in political determination and identity is further extended in the work of E.S. Atieno Odhiambo and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, whose ground-breaking *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature* (1981) first questioned how language and knowledge operate within structures of colonial power and dispossession. Andean Indigenous thinkers Nina Pacari, Fernando Huaracuni Mamani, and Felix Patzi Paco are at the forefront of this theoretical framing of decoloniality. Aníbal Quijano introduced the term coloniality/decoloniality in 1990. Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh remain the most quoted in this volume for their assertion of a possibility for decolonial praxis within both concepts and analytics. It is also important to recall the recent work of Folúkẹ́ Adébísí who reminds us that decolonisation is a 'set of context-dependent strategies, adopted by activists resisting colonisation – with the goal of reparative justice' (*Decolonisation and Legal Knowledge: Reflections on Power and Possibility*, 2023).

Within this volume, the first two contributors present pedagogical and theoretical challenges to the now 'overpopulated discourse' in this field (Bakshi). Both provide excellent groundwork for understanding the trajectories of decolonial studies and decolonisation and the foundations made in decades of work by primarily global south scholars. In 'Decolonising (in) the University: Reflecting from Edinburgh on Possibilities and Complexities,' **Ali Kassem** offers a case study of his experiences, raising the important question for students and faculty about the utility of teaching and researching decoloniality within a space such as the University of Edinburgh. Kassem's surprise and frustration is a

reminder that decoloniality can never solely be an intellectual exercise in possibilities or merely the theory that underlies Equality, Diversity and Inclusion directives. For Kassem, decoloniality is 'a dismantlement and a moving beyond that Eurocentric modern model of knowledge and being in the world.'

He poses the question whether decolonisation is phenomenological. This is challenged within the space of teaching third year Social and Political Science students studying Sociology. Students' confusion about decoloniality was found in their seeming inability to understand decolonisation as praxis. Anyone spending time around the university in late 2023 and early 2024 who witnessed or participated in the various planned and apparently spontaneous protests and demonstrations in support of a ceasefire, an end to the genocide in Gaza and for clearer, more articulate support for the rights of trans students will acknowledge that Edinburgh students and staff have a very clear sense of decolonial praxis.

As such, much of this enlightenment occurs outside the classroom. Kassem charts those moments where an equal amount of important discussion happens. Yet he is aware that in some university settings this extra-tutorial instruction might act as substitute for what needs to also happen in and to the classroom. That Kassem recounts how he had to introduce decolonisation during the tutorial, then explain to white SPS students why it is also important to them, speaks volumes for the need for this work and for the necessity for the Institute Project on Decoloniality.

In sharing his classroom experiences at Edinburgh, Kassem challenges us to consider 'the limits of what could be heard' in relation to entire systems rooted in epistemic colonisation – making the final anecdote of 'decolonisation unfolding in the heart of Empire' all the more ironic and meaningful.

Sandeep Bakshi's contribution, 'Theorising Decolonial Queerness: Connections, Definitions, Articulations', offers a foundational text that outlines the failures or limits of stretching the concept of decolonisation beyond the goals of recognition and justice. Bakshi echoes Bhambra's concept of connected sociologies and Mignolo's

figuring of epistemic reconstitution. He offers an introduction to the ways decoloniality and Queer theory converge 'towards notions of transformative politics and justice' with the ultimate goal of connecting both theoretical frameworks. Bakshi's work stands out in this collection as one of the only Fellows in the first cohort with a past active engagement in the production of decolonial scholarship. While scaffolding archaeologies of decoloniality versus decolonisation he reminds us, as Jay Sarkar does in her chapter on reading the early histories of dispossession experienced by the Rohingyas of Myanmar through a decolonial lens, of the mistake of over-exhausting the concept to the point of removing its self-informed sense of immanence.

Bakshi cautions that decolonial queerness 'signals not only the immediacy of the need to factor in formations of race, immigration, diasporas and other instances of exclusion, but also, instructs queer analyses to emplace dominant queerness in global processes of control and territorial aggrandisement.' In showing the clear connections and perhaps parallel genealogies with transnational feminism, Black queer studies and queer of colour critiques, Bakshi urges us to go further by reconsidering this view of decolonial queerness as one that deprivileges 'queerness as a facile nominal identity.'

The stolen knowledge, skills and labour of captive and enslaved Africans and their descendants made a substantial economic and social/cultural effect on the expansion, sustained success and reputation of the Edinburgh Medical School and Royal Infirmary. The difficulty of articulating this in a way that makes an appropriate call for redress, while simultaneously respecting the lives and legacies of the enslaved, lies at the heart of **Rachael Scally**'s study, 'The Early Years of the Edinburgh Medical School and Royal Infirmary: Slavery, Medicine and Philanthropy in Scotland, c.1726-1879.' To speak of the Medical School's achievements and reputation in the eighteenth century is to simultaneously recall the unspoken traumas enslaved and colonised people endured during this celebrated period of medical and scientific exploration and innovation. Scally begins with the incontestable fact that during the eighteenth century, 188

students from the Americas – nearly every single one from a colony economically founded on the traffic, capture and enslavement of African people – graduated from the Edinburgh Medical School, while nearly 300 matriculated from this region.

Scally has focused this study on creating a record of the principal Scottish men involved in a number of colonial enterprises and speculations. The chapter makes space to distinguish between different kinds of engagement, including mostly London-based wealthy Scots who funded the establishment of the Royal Infirmary and medical school with money accumulated through colonial investments in either East India and South Sea Companies, tobacco and the Atlantic trade, or, crucially, the slave trade in West Africa. Others include those students who matriculated and/or graduated from the medical school and practiced medicine in the Americas, and those benefiting from direct financial gain from pens in the island of Jamaica. Each area has the potential to initiate new deeper research and has far-reaching frameworks and afterlives, contributing to larger efforts by scholars across disciplines to reckon with Scotland's connections and contributions to the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Theologian **Theodore Trost**'s IPD Fellowship offered an inward-facing challenge that potentially crosses and blends disciplinary boundaries and does the difficult work of clearing space for future decolonial work. Trost's distinctive approach in his chapter 'The Gospel of the Unnamed and the Subversion of Greatness' presents a provocation that uses the 'rhetorical' patterns found in the speeches and slogans of former president Donald Trump (who in 2024 is facing 91 felony criminal charges in US courts from a number of prosecutions) around the concept of greatness as the means to recognise how the Gospel of Mark in the New Testament arrives at its own understanding of greatness. The essay focuses on encounters Jesus had with three women, so marginal that they remained unnamed, in which either Jesus himself or his disciples grow in their understanding of greatness. It is a challenging suggestion that extends previous work on Mark's gospel that presents Jesus as becoming the Christ.

The gentile woman of chapter 7, the widow of chapter 12 and the woman who anoints Jesus's feet with oil in chapter 14 in their own way reinforce and subvert the question 'what makes an individual great?' for the first generation of listeners and readers of Mark's gospel. The question of who or what signals greatness is also reinforced and subverted by Trost for followers of Trump, whose seemingly vague definition of 'American greatness' belongs both to an imaginary past that only existed in fictional representations, and serves as a dog-whistle to another past in its very real representation in which the pursuit of a certain type of 'greatness' remains the catalyst for significant structural inequality in American society. Trost's provocations here speak to the heart of IASH's decoloniality project and of all ongoing conversations that continue to unfold throughout 2021 to 2024 and beyond.

The contributions of **Bharti Arora** and **Jayita Sarkar** expose the potential challenges, ambiguities and advantages found in engaging with decolonial theory (which naturally balances those challenges, ambiguities and advantages within its theoretical matrix) in their own research across literature and history. In 'Decolonial Praxis of Land Rights: Peasants' Negotiation with the Nation-State,' Arora, a Charles Wallace India Trust Fellow, offers a new approach to reading Phanishwarnath Renu's *Parati: Parikatha* and Shrilal Shukla's *Saint of Bisrampur* using decolonial theory. In her short experimental study, she shows how each novel reveals the ways in which the work of scholars like Mignolo allows for a deeper understanding of the struggle for 'land rights, caste struggles, and allied frames of solidarities' in Indian novels written during the second half of the twentieth century. Arora's reading engages with the apparent contradictions between policy and praxis faced by post-colonial nation states like India in the 1950s. Mignolo's assertions of the linkages between decolonial thought, political action and 'ancestral indigenous knowledge' practices are exposed in Shukla's willingness to criticise the Bhoodan movement, but also his seeming unwillingness to present 'peasant' characters like Ramlotan with any sense of their inner thoughts or perspective.

'Locating the Rohingyas in Decolonisation as a Moment, Process and Movement' locates Sarkar's research background in global and transnational histories of decolonisation, preparing her for this Fellowship in which her work focuses on how different 'prisms' of decolonisation over time has forever altered the worlds of the Rohingya people of Myanmar since the second world war. Using in part the life stories of several men who played crucial roles in the battle for South Asian empires during World War II, Sarkar also reveals the journey of the term 'decolonisation' as first referring to what she terms 'movement,' borrowing from Moritz J. Bonn. In the post-war period, the term moves to mean that violent action on the part of those who resisted colonisation – as laid out famously by Fanon in the creation of a renewed pre-colonial encounter body politic. Sarkar identifies this understanding of decolonisation as a process – which meant for the Rohingyas alienation from the new Burmese government, culminating in the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law.

The six chapters printed in this first volume serve as the start of a wider ongoing discussion about the possibilities of meaningful decolonial thought amongst those of us affiliated with the Institute of Advanced Studies in the Humanities and the University of Edinburgh as a whole. Each Fellow presents a challenge either within their field of research or across disciplinary boundaries (history, sociology, literary/cultural studies, theology). As is shown in the resulting contributions, some are works in progress; a substantial amount of necessary ground was covered during the fellowships and difficult questions asked by the Fellows of themselves and their academic institutions. There is still much work to be done, further collaborations to be made, and the work of underrepresented and underfunded scholars from the global south and here in the UK to be supported more widely. The cautions given by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang ('Decolonisation is Not a Metaphor', 2012) and Priyamvada Gopal ('On Decolonisation and the University', 2021) still demand recognition when it comes to academic institutions and researchers acknowledging their involvement in the creation and maintenance of structural inequality and epistemic violence, combined with a willingness to make changes from within that

reflect a truer understanding of decolonisation that begins and ends with reparative justice. As the editor of both this and the second volume – which continues in that push toward decolonial praxis through scholarly engagement, I hold on to a critical hope in this project.

Dr Désha Osborne

Series Editor

ALI KASSEM

Decolonising (in) the University: Reflecting from Edinburgh on Possibilities and Complexities

Over the past years, decolonisation has become a major buzzword globally, and in Euro-American academia specifically. In the UK, a series of campaigns and movements have consequently developed, transforming multiple UK university campuses into sites of decolonial debate. The University of Edinburgh, laden with colonial and imperial legacies and privileges, has not been a stranger to this. In 2021, I joined the University of Edinburgh's Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities as a postdoctoral research fellow as part of the Institute Project on Decoloniality. Prior to this, I had completed my PhD at the University of Sussex where I also taught with the department of Sociology. Before that, I had received undergraduate and graduate education and training at the American University of Beirut and the Ludwig-Maximillian University in Munich, among other westernised educational institutions across Lebanon and Western Europe. Separately, I have a longstanding engagement with the Shia Hawza – the 'traditional' space of Shia Muslim teaching and learning. My research focuses on coloniality of both knowledge and being specifically in relation to the Arabic-speaking world and exploring questions of racialisation, internalised self-hate, and intersectional social injustices.

During my time at Edinburgh, I taught on two courses with the department of Sociology: a third-year social theory course and a first-year course titled *Understanding Race and Colonialism*. 'Social theory' is a module for Sociology students that presents various perspectives in sociological thought considered 'key perspectives' – including critical realism, the strong program in cultural sociology, and critical race theory. *Understanding Race and Colonialism* is a newly-introduced university-wide module at the School of Social and Political Science open to all of Edinburgh's pre-honours students regardless of year or major. Deeply transdisciplinary, it is structured around weekly lectures delivered by different scholars from across the university and weekly seminars where smaller numbers of students enter into conversation around the week's themes and questions. I was responsible for delivering two lectures, and all tutorials for two groups of students. Topics ranged from contemporary health inequalities to transnational theorisations of race-making. Additionally, I offered a series of guest lectures and student-facing talks around the theme of the decolonial across the university and was involved with the School of Social and Political Science in developing inclusive teaching training and strategies. This chapter reflects on these educational experiences to draw a series of insights around attempting to teach 'decolonially' today at the heart of Empire.

Doing the Decolonial

Decolonisation is here understood as a dismantlement and a moving beyond the Eurocentric modem model of knowledge and being in the world. Better referred to as decoloniality, it is a pursuit of a material as well as epistemic delinking from the contemporary 'capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system' produced over 500 years of colonisation across fields of knowledge, power, and being (Grosfoguel, 2016).

The 'westernized university' refers to the modern/colonial institution of teaching, learning, and knowledge production

'embedded in Eurocentric epistemologies that are posited as objective, disembodied and universal' (Cupples, 2019, p.2). Found across the world, in both the global south and the global north, it is a globalised institution that is at the centre of coloniality where a dominant Eurocentric canon 'attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production. It is a canon that disregards other epistemic traditions' (Mbembe, 2016, p.32). Cognizant of this western model of knowledge and being's multi-scalar destructions and violences and the urgent need to articulate alternatives to it and move beyond it, 'decolonising' the university hence emerges as most urgent. Bhambra et al. (2018, p.5) accordingly posit the necessity of taking the university as a key site of contemporary decolonisation and social justice struggles, explaining that 'it was in the university that colonial intellectuals developed theories of racism, popularised discourses that bolstered support for colonial endeavours and provided ethical and intellectual grounds for the dispossession, oppression and domination of colonised subjects' that continue to shape the contemporary modern world. In the following sub-sections, I will posit, reflect on, and analyse two sets of experiences encountered while pursuing such a decolonial educational labour at the University of Edinburgh; one more promising and the second more focused on challenges and complexities. This structure is for analytical clarity, and the modalities discussed therein are surely not discrete nor contained but rather deeply entwined and co-constitutive.

Possibilities and Positive Engagements

As a student, researcher, and educator in the westernized university one quickly realises the absences: the extent to which anti/post/decolonial and related questions and those who have thought, researched, and written about them are missing from curricula and pedagogies. Through teaching third year students on the Social Theory module for example, I realised that students have had little if any exposure to critical theories of race and racialisation, of imperialism, of colonialism, of southern thought, or of dependency, for example. While some had heard of Edward

Said and Orientalism, none seemed to have engaged it as a scholarship to make sense of the present. As I asked students whether they had been exposed to black, indigenous, or anti-imperial theorists, their reactions were of confusion with one student even 'guessing' that such theories are more to be found in 'global studies' or 'area studies' rather than in sociology. Anti-colonial and anti-imperial movements and activists, from the Zapatistas to Bandung and to indigenous movements across the globe were similarly absent. Discussing this with colleagues and students, some assumed that such 'specialised' or 'niche' scholarship is relevant at the level of graduate study, or if the student themselves pursue it. Such scholarship and fields of study are not constitutive of a broad and foundational 'sociological training', I was told. Meanwhile, sociology's so-called 'founding fathers' (Marx, Weber, and Durkheim) and related developments in sociological thinking – including critical realism, cultural sociology, and symbolic interactionism, for example – are essential to teach and learn. And indeed, these were the questions, issues, and thinkers that students seemed to have encountered repeatedly across their courses and modules.

The naturalisation of this erasure, and the canonisation of specific schools of thinking rooted in the experiences and epistemes of Eurocentric modernity was blatant (see Bhambra and Holmwood, 2021). Grosfoguel (2016) had asked:

> How is it possible that the canon of thought in all the disciplines of the Social Sciences and Humanities in the Westernized university (Grosfoguel 2012) is based on the knowledge produced by a few men from five countries in Western Europe (Italy, France, England, Germany and the USA)? ... How did they come to monopolize the authority of knowledge in the world? Why is it that what we know today as social, historical, philosophical, or Critical Theory is based on the socio-historical experience and world views of men from these five countries? (Grosfoguel, 2016, p.74)

He subsequently notes that 'There is no scandal in this because they are a reflection of the normalized racist/sexist epistemic structures of knowledge of the modern/colonial world.' (Grosfoguel, 2016, p.87)

As I introduced and positioned myself within southern and anti/post/decolonial scholarship across classes and raised a 'decolonial ethos' of teaching and learning, in line with the erasures and hegemonies outlined above, multiple students expressed that they do not understand what 'decolonisation means' nor what anti-racism 'implies exactly'. Certainly, these do not mean unitary things. Yet, students were not unable to conceptualise decolonisation or anti-racism because of the complexity, plurality, or heterogeneity of these concepts but rather because of their invisibility and/or imagined distance from and foreignness in relation to both their lived experiences as well as their training in the social sciences. In my teaching experience, the persistent question was accordingly that of the possibility, or the impossibility, of engaging such a wide-ranging body of work with students who have had very little training in critical schools of thought and who had, broadly speaking, rarely been given opportunities for such thinking throughout their education.

It is important to acknowledge that there were exceptions to this, in almost every class. Indeed, a (small) number of students were well-informed about decolonisation and relevant debates explaining that they developed such knowledge 'personally' and through student organisations. Some students said they have engaged such work outside the university, including through environmental, class-based, gender, and other forms of activism. This is deeply linked to the wider happenings of the past years – including the Black Lives Matter movement, the anti-racist and anti-colonial protests that happened across the UK, as well as wider socio-political and economic shifts and failures across the global north among other things. These conversations are, indeed, unfolding. One exchange student from Denmark, for example, explained that conversation and knowledge around anti-racist and anti/post/decolonial themes were developing transnationally particularly among the youth despite, instead of alongside or

through, the westernized university and its educational model. These and a much larger number of students expressed a serious desire – even need – for such conversations within their formal education and a frustration by their absence. Indeed, many students approached me after classes throughout and at the end of terms asking for resources, or expressing appreciation for being exposed to this material and, more importantly, to this mode of critical inquiry and reflection. Many sent elaborate emails of a lasting impact these conversations had on how they engaged their other courses, or even on how they were inhabiting the world. The issue, in this sense, must not be reduced or dismissed as a lack of interest or concern – it was much less the students who considered such topics 'niche' or 'fringe' as much as it was the university. This was key in thinking the possibility of a decolonial teaching and conversations.

After one tutorial class on the Race and Colonialism module where the 'decolonial approach' was briefly explained, one student raised the question of their own relations to it or lack thereof. Categorising themselves as 'white British', they explained thoughts and concerns about decolonial and anti-racist work as not something for them to do and that they would not really have much to contribute anyway despite their concern and cognizance of the issues at hand. In response to this, I offered two examples while we continued our discussion after the tutorial time had ended. The first is from the Haitian revolution (see Bhambra, 2015), where after the revolution and the establishment of a new order political subjectivity and 'citizenship' were defined as the purview of Blacks – where blackness was understood as anti-imperialism. Here, in many ways, it was 'politics' that determined one's 'identity'. The second was Fanon's argument that colonisation does not only destroy the colonised, but the coloniser and all those implicated through various means and modes (see Fanon, 2003; 2008). The conversation then discussed modernity and its destruction of earth and its dwellers, mental health, and growing inequalities and injustices and the impact this has on everyone regardless of their supposed identities or positions. The student (and other students who stayed to listen-in and contribute) discussed what this means and how it is experienced

21

in contemporary everyday life. This developed decolonisation not as an identitarian struggle of a specific group, but rather the struggle of all and for all. In this respect, allyship emerged as important but also the possibility and need to move beyond allyship and to realise that the decolonial struggle is one in which everyone has a responsibility as well as a right. Ultimately, while we cannot exit our racialisations, privileges, or intersectional positionalities, we can occupy resistant, anti-hegemonic positions, and move epistemically – in our ways of being and inhabiting the world without erasing the complexity, limitations, or required care. Through this discussion, two 'white British' students stated that this was the 'first time' they 'understand decolonisation' and themselves as 'part of it'. The fact that students had little to no space to explore these issues throughout their prior education was, albeit expected, frustrating.

In parallel, a number of standard narratives and misconceptions about the decolonial were raised by students across classes – from decolonisation being a historical question that has ended, to moral relativism, including claims that it was 'of its time', to critiques of 'political correctness' and a 'cancel culture'. An introduction to the concepts of coloniality rather than colonialism (Grosfoguel, 2013), to how the legacies of the past condition and structure the present (Bhambra, 2007), to ongoing and growing contemporary global racialised injustices and violence, empirical data around the ecological crises, health crises, and global inequalities, were some of the avenues through which challenging these narratives could begin. But more important perhaps is realizing that the possibility of having honest and constructive conversations with students to examine these assumptions requires a certain level of trust and rapport in the classroom. Indeed, it is crucial for classrooms to be spaces where not only is the decolonial explored, but also where the various misconceptions around it are raised, discussed, and elaborated on. Unlearning – understood as 'the first step' in working against coloniality and toward 'relearning to learn alongside, from and with knowledges and ways of being in the world that modernity and Western ideologies have rendered invisible and continue to negate' (Walsh, 2015, p.13) is indispensable in this – and includes

unlearning various infrastructural narratives that sustain and reproduce modernity/coloniality. This begins with identifying these narratives to then dialogue, converse, exchange, and critically engage them and their infrastructures of thought – without falling into naïve assumptions of 'ignorance' as the root or exclusive cause of colonialist, imperialist, racist, or other exclusionary discourses and/or behaviours.

A key method of developing such a decolonial learning is allowing students the space to think across their various and different lived experiences. Aware that classrooms are always highly diverse, in some ways more than others, there is much potential to mobilise participants' differing life histories and knowledges to make visible extant modernist narratives and their limitations as a key avenue of unlearning. Undoubtedly, this is complex, and requires the ability and need to know and engage students at levels that are made difficult by a neoliberal corporatized model of higher education. Yet it is possible.

One example of this was a discussion on the category of 'Europe' in a class where I knew there were English, Scottish, as well as French, Eastern European, South Asian and Russian students. Raising the question of what Europe is, and what it means for it to be a continent, a discussion of borders and bordering practices quickly developed. Most students in the class had never heard of Eurasia, others (including myself) had been told in their school years that the shift from a Eurasia to a separate Europe and Asia was due to tectonic plates and a growing geological distance between Europe and Asia. The student from Russia was surprised the term Eurasia was being discussed as a historical term, expressing how in their mind Eurasia was very much alive and kicking. Further discussing the Mediterranean as a border and Europe's conceptualisation as radically different from Africa similarly brought forth multiple questions and personal reflections from travel and media, as well as family and social circles. Ultimately, Europe was denaturalised as a category, and its borders were seen as selectively constructed at specific historical moments – and continuously being made and remade – in view and in service of specific power structures. This unlearning of the

'natural borders' of Europe – the basis of much racist, xenophobic, and genocidal border regimes – broke down in light of a critical student conversation. Here, it was the experiences of British students from BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) backgrounds in particular, explaining how their grandparents or parents arrived in Britain, that further allowed a radical shifting of the terms on which migration could be discussed, the history of Britain could be understood, and the questions of legitimacy, rights and belonging today could be framed. A student with mixed ancestry, for example, shared the story of his family's arrival in the UK from the colonies, the longstanding and numerous sacrifices made for 'Britain' across its wars and the price paid for its development, the struggles involved since arriving, and the family's attempts to 'integrate'. Leading to a deeply emotive discussion, this session was a wonderful (basic) example of how decolonial teaching can open avenues of learning and unlearning beyond the cognitive – ones that are deeply embodied, experiential, affective, moving.

In one tutorial session on the Social Theory module discussing orientalism and postcolonial theories, I argued for the need to both acknowledge the racist and colonial foundations of contemporary health systems, but, and more importantly, deconstruct the standard narratives abjecting and devaluing alternative health systems and understandings from across the world as an example of ongoing epistemic coloniality. In reaction to this the one black international student from the African continent who had been mostly quiet during previous sessions had much to say and contribute. This included knowledges passed down from her grandmother, as well as practices and everyday customs around health and one's relationship to body and diet that continue to survive at the margins despite 'modernisation', as she explained. In developing this, she said she had 'never' had the space to bring her 'African experiences' into a classroom in the UK, nor had she ever felt that such experiences and knowledges would be valued. This led to an extremely rich conversation after the class with a number of other students. As she was the clear 'expert' and held far more knowledges in this discussion then myself and all other students, the teacher-learner hierarchy was

here destabilised as students from Othered spaces put forth Othered invaluable knowledges and experiences. Here, those students occupying positions of relative privilege – be this racial or otherwise – did not become passive. Rather, this speaking was being listened to, and listening is an active effort. Indeed, this speaking was being engaged, amplified, and supported, shifting the site of the classroom into one of alternative knowledges.

The argument I am making here is that students have experiences and knowledges – complex and rich lived and transmitted experiences and knowledges spanning diverse fields and issues from racism and capitalism to health and technologies – and that classrooms (and spill-over discussions) can be sites in which they bring these knowledges to put them in conversation with one another. Such conversations, ones that transcend and undo the discourses, binaries, categories, and Otherness constructed by 500 years of colonial assault, lead to unlearning as a key avenue of decolonisation. In other words, decolonial teaching involves enabling students to learn as well as unlearn including through reflecting on their experiences, and to learn and unlearn with their classmates by reflecting on each other's experiences and putting these experiences into conversation. To do this, these classrooms must be critical, open, and safe spaces, and a prior relationship of a shared formation and dialogue must be fostered.

Yet, ultimately, the extent to which classrooms within the contemporary neoliberal bureaucratic university within larger climates of polarised 'culture wars' can be transformed into such sites remains limited, constrained. In the following sub-section, I further explore such constraints and resulting complexities.

Limitations and complexities

In 2019, a campaign – and subsequent controversy – led the University of Edinburgh to change the name of its David Hume Tower to 40 George Square. It is in that tower that one of our classes was held. Another class was adjacent to a room called the 'Darwin Room'; yet another was in the Old Medical School, a building that houses an anatomical museum containing the

remains of colonised peoples and out of which much 'racial science' and eugenics was broadcast to the world throughout the past 300+ years. The names of colonists and Imperial leaders pervade in the University – one from where the celebrated Scottish enlightenment produced (un)ethical and 'scientific' systems that legitimised and moralised dispossession and genocide. The re-naming of David Hume Tower was an issue that garnered much media attention, but the persistence of many other signifiers and their celebration says much about how decolonisation unfolds in the space of higher education – and how it does not. The university indeed remains permeated by a haunting material colonial presence, an imperial physical space and architecture, nomenclature, and ethos. Within it, all teaching was near-exclusively in a colonial language (English). These all could form significant barriers to decolonial possibilities. Yet, this was not all that was hindering the decolonial.

In my tutorials on the Race and Colonialism and Social Theory courses, some students only attended one or two classes throughout term. While this is surely a complex issue that plagues higher education generally, it could be indicative of interest and perception of value – or the lack thereof. Even if this is not the case, when students are less and less capable – under pressures of multiple jobs, care duties, and dreadful living conditions and assaults on mental health among other challenges – to physically come to class and systematically engage and enter into a conversation of both unlearning and learning, decolonial work cannot develop. Surely, decoloniality cannot be bite-sized pre-recorded lectures or crammed individualised summary readings and exam-taking.

In a guest lecture to an undergraduate course in Islamic studies, I began by asking students why they were interested in studying about 'Islam'. The responses varied, and while some were quite insightful, most were deeply embedded in colonialist orientalising narratives. Some students wanted to learn about Islam as it presented a claimed distant mysterious foreign culture. Some wanted to understand why there was so much Islamophobia, and/or why so much animosity 'between the west and Muslims' is

said to exist. In reaction to this answer, my advice to the student was to study Euro-America – specifically its history as well as contemporary reality – of colonialism and Imperialism across Muslim-majority spaces. Some were not particularly interested in learning about Islam to begin with, but were simply there because their degree programs required it or because it would benefit their future careers in fields including cultural work, development, government, or aid, among others. Either way, this indicated a powerful handicap to the decolonial: a motivation to learn situated within a westernised paradigm and a corporatized university model and larger economy.

Beyond the classroom itself, one indication of the challenges the decolonial faces are student papers. By examining questions students choose to answer and the modes through which they developed these answers, one could glimpse some of the students' thinking. For the Race and Colonialism class, students were tasked with writing reflective papers in response to a series of prompts based on class readings. Some, it is key to note, powerfully mobilised decolonial concepts to make sense of various relevant issues and challenges across the contemporary world. Others completely ignored such concepts, or unfortunately emptied them out. One paper 'justified' colonialism as a necessary means of 'development' and 'progress', but wanted to 'acknowledge' the 'mistakes' made and their ongoing effects. The comfort and privilege that allowed the student to submit such a paper to this class itself says plenty. Regardless, how could a student, at the end of a course on race and colonialism and an entire semester of (presumed) exposure to these issues, lectures, readings, and tutorials, write an essay completely imbricated in modernist, developmentalist, and Eurocentric civilizational narratives? While this essay was certainly not the norm, it does raise existential questions about the limits of what could be heard, the depth of epistemic colonisation, and the arduous task of discussing decoloniality where we have all been shaped by modernist discourses throughout and across our lives.

In the autumn semester, I presented a guest lecture to a small Masters-level course. Toward the end of the lecture, one Scottish

(Muslim convert) student declared that the decolonial argument as to what western modernity is, what it does, was 'strange'. The west, and its modernity, had problems, they argued, but the 'modernity' that developed in Europe was ultimately the epitome of all human civilizations whereby the 'progress', 'development', and 'freedoms' that had been gained represented humanity's ultimate achievements. To critique, reject, and search for alternative models of being and knowing alongside indigenous communities 'in forests', was unfathomable, they said. After much back and forth including a lengthy conversation about the climate catastrophe, the urban, and the binaries and oppressions that this modernity enforces and that enforce it, the student – completely ignoring the conceptual and analytical argument I had made – expressed surprise as to why I was in Edinburgh and why I would not 'find a piece of land' somewhere in 'rural Lebanon' and simply go and live there. At this, the conversation was ended and the class was dismissed. Loaded with entitlement, refusal/inability to listen, and epistemic colonisation, these views are surely not exceptional nor unique. More significant perhaps was the mode through which they were comfortably expressed, and how they arrived at an abjection of those arguing for the decolonial out of visibility and an invitation to exist the 'modern space' and return to the 'wild'.

Throughout classes and teaching experiences, a number of students were keenly interested in the anti-racist potential of post/anti/decolonial thought. Yet, when conversations developed towards a dismantlement of Eurocentric structures and modes of being in the world, some students became uneasy. At times, authors such as Audre Lorde or Frantz Fanon, when their texts were closely examined, were described as 'too radical' and 'too much'. While some argued that a pragmatic or 'realistic' approach required an understanding that 'access' and 'basic needs' of marginalized and minoritized communities the world over were the key concern at this current historical moment, others explained what I would call an epistemological embrace of modernity/coloniality as a civilizational model of knowledge and being. For many in this latter group, the issue was inclusion in modernity/coloniality, not a dismantling of it. The purpose was

not to undo consumer capitalism and neoliberalisation; the purpose was not to abolish the nation-state and its citizenship regimes, or to move beyond anthropocentrism, or to undo patriarchal heteronormativity.... Rather, the need was to 'include' those historically and structurally marginalised from these 'privileges' into them: allowing them into the club. Surely, this is not to reduce the plurality of anti/post/decolonial thinking or the complexity and multiplicity of needed decolonial tactics, both in the short and longer terms. Yet, it is to say that an epistemological embrace of Eurocentric modernity – capitalist, patriarchal, heteronormative, materialist, secularist, anthropocentric, hierarchist, empiricist... – and a pursuit of inclusion within it is not 'decolonial' and is surely not liberatory.

During semester 2, a student organisation whose membership was mostly from Asian and Muslim communities and backgrounds – both international and British – approached me to offer a student-facing talk. This was after having spoken at another student-facing Islamophobia event where I raised questions about decolonisation and the entwinement of various forms of modern racialisation. I expressed keen interest in offering such a talk and was excited for the prospect of discussing the decolonial with a 'BAME crowd' in Edinburgh, something I had not had much opportunity to do. I suggested I discuss decolonisation and alternative futures focusing on two issues – the 'climate catastrophe' and 'queerness'. I was asked what I meant by queerness. I explained that the argument was to critically rethink heteronormativity and the gender binary as quintessentially Eurocentric modern concepts, pointing to the wealth and diversity in gender and sexual expressions and forms of being across the world and the attempts at erasing these with colonial modernisation. In this sense, I wanted to argue for the queer potentials in various Othered 'civilizational models' including (but not limited to) the Islamicate – without surely fetishizing or glorifying such models or denying the limitations and complexities within their regimes of gender and sexuality. The organising committee was clearly uneasy. After some back-and-forth, I was asked if I could discuss the decolonial by only focusing on the climate catastrophe as the question of sexualities was very

'sensitive' and would draw 'controversy' as well as some 'problems' with some ('conservative religious') students. I declined to do so, and the event never happened. Forms of identitarian interest in decoloniality, for example, that centre a critique of western politico-economic imperialism or a selection of power structures such as Islamophobia but preserves other forms of assault and violence such as homophobia, are not liberatory decolonisation. Perhaps some want a decolonial conversation that provides selective liberation for some and not others. Perhaps some want a decolonial conversation that does not provoke nor disrupt. Fragmenting the decolonial risks re-inscribing extant power dynamics, and insidiously reproducing violences and oppressions even if under different guises or in 'different' spaces. Either way, decolonial education is one that seeks liberation for all.

These conversations and encounters with students consequently reveal some of the complexities, as well as the limits, of how decolonising the university and decolonisation in the university can and cannot unfold. Decolonisation is not about diversifying or adding or 'BAME students' being 'represented' in the curriculum nor is it about selective and exclusionary 'empowerment'. It is about a radical – in the sense of 'at the roots' as Angela Davis (1990, p.14) explains – rethinking of the entire education model as well as the larger civilisational model and knowledge structures that underpin it. It is about understanding how hegemonic knowledge came to be, what it serves, what it conceals and erases, what it permits, and how more liberatory futures for all can be pursued. It cannot be complicit or complacent in reproducing any of the exclusionary, assaulting, violent structures of modernity/coloniality under different names, or based on different genealogies, identities, or positions. Accordingly, some students who at first appeared supportive of the decolonial gradually became less interested in it as they learned about it. This included students from 'BAME backgrounds', or international students from across the global south, who sought a pursuit of inclusion within modernity/coloniality or who shared some (or many) of its tenets and pursuits.

Conclusion

Many students at Edinburgh exhibited much enthusiasm and desire to think beyond the dominant narratives and trope of a modernist civilizational model that they experience as a failure – from its destruction of Earth to its assault on their physical and mental wellbeing. Yet some were sceptical, distrustful, or outright rejecting of the decolonial. Many students who were at first uninterested or even rejecting developed much enthusiasm for and investment in decolonisation once they were given the space to discuss it, unlearn circulating tropes and misunderstandings, and explore Othered knowledges and modes of being. While this required labour against an entire colonised modern episteme and its 'common sense', its founding narratives, and its most basic and deeply internalised discourses, it was possible and unfolding both within and beyond universities and campuses. Some others, while at first seemingly excited by its title, became uninterested and distant with some even considering it a danger to dreams and horizons of inclusion within existing power structures or to their own ideologies that aligned with those of modernity/coloniality. Positionings in relation to the decolonial are not fixed nor, most importantly perhaps, could they be captured in identitarian terms of racial, religious, citizenship, or ethnic belonging or background. To whom the decolonial spoke is a complicated question that remains for future work to develop. Either way, the conclusion here is that it functioned ambivalently as it spoke to different students, in different ways, to different extents. Many of these were generative ways, while some were far less so. Ultimately, decolonial educators must realise that decolonisation is an epistemic as well as material struggle, and that their students' epistemic positionings must not be reduced, collapsed, or assumed to fit any supposed 'identities'.

Transforming classrooms into decolonial spaces requires sustained conversation, care and rapport to both unlearn and relearn beyond the hierarchical model of teacher-student and a neoliberalised corporatized system. Developing a critical sensibility alongside all those marginalised and excluded, decolonial teaching must remain liberatory and deeply disruptive.

Despite its multiple challenges and complexities, transforming classrooms into spaces and sites to think through, challenge, critique, and develop alternatives with and alongside students and their various experiences is both possible and urgent. Classrooms (and their extensions) would henceforth be shifted into spaces 'at the service of a world beyond the "Capitalist/Patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric Modern/Colonial World-System"' (Grosfoguel, 2016, p.89).

Since leaving Edinburgh I moved to the National University of Singapore. A few weeks after joining, I was in conversation with a senior scholar about contemporary higher education where I presented the important and significant example of the *Understanding Race and Colonialism* module and its aims. Their reaction was "At Edinburgh?" with a combination of bemusement and surprise. Indeed, the irony of decolonisation unfolding in the heart of Empire – while it remains unthinkable across much of the global south – must not be overlooked. 'Decolonising the university' has its limits, and decolonising a university such as Edinburgh can only go so far. Consequently, I would end by asking what and how can alternative spaces of knowledge, critique, learning, and dialogue, ones beyond the epistemic frames as well as the forms, structures, and spaces of the westernised university, be developed in Edinburgh as well as across the globe?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bhambra, G.K., 2007. *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bhambra, G.K., 2015. On the Haitian Revolution and the Society of Equals. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 32(7–8): pp.267–274.

Bhambra, G.K., and Holmwood, J., 2021. *Colonialism and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bhambra, G.K., Gebrial, D., and Nişancıoğlu, K., 2018. *Decolonising the University*. London: Pluto Press.

Davis, Angela Y., 1990. *Women, Culture & Politics*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Fanon, F., 2001. *The Wretched of the Earth*, new ed. London: Penguin Classics.

Fanon, F., 2008. *Black Skin, White Masks*, revised ed. London: Pluto Press.

Grosfoguel, R., 2013. The structure of knowledge in Westernized universities: epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides of the long 16th century. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, 11(1), Article 8: pp.73–90.

Mbembe, J.A., 2016. Decolonizing the university: new directions. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 15(1): pp.29–45.

Walsh, C.E., 2019. (Decolonial) Notes to Paulo Freire: Walking and Asking. In Aman, R., Ireland, T. (eds), *Educational Alternatives in Latin America*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan: pp.207-230.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Ali Kassem is a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the National University of Singapore. He was an IASH-Alwaleed postdoctoral research fellow associated with the Institute Project on Decoloniality in 2021-22. During 2020-2021, he was postdoctoral research fellow with the Arab Council for the Social Sciences and the Carnegie Corporation of New York with an affiliation to the Beirut Urban Lab at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Ali received his PhD in 2020 from the School of Law, Politics, and Sociology at the University of Sussex and held teaching appointments at Sussex between 2018-2021. He has also previously held research and/or teaching positions at the Ludwig-Maximillian University in Munich, the Ecole Des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris, AUB, the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies, the Lebanese American University, and others. His main interests are in Post-, anti-, and decolonial work, ethnic and racial studies, inequalities, sexualities, Islam and Knowledge making on which Ali has published multiple peer-reviewed and non-academic articles and essays.

SANDEEP BAKSHI

Theorising Decolonial Queerness: Connections, Definitions, Articulations

> Who will connect the ideological dots of racism, colonization, capitalism, sexism and heterosexism in ways that our children understand?
>
> (Tamale, 2020, p.9)

The labour in addressing the meaning of decolonising knowledge calls forth an honest and thorough critical appraisal of the standardised canon of knowledge without eliding critical questions of privilege in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and social capital among others. Continuing the theorisation initiated by the collective, Decolonizing Sexualities Network (DSN), with which I have been associated for over a decade, I attempt to theorise and define the parameters of decolonial queerness by defining the field and its key points. Despite a growing body of literature seeking to frame connective strands of decolonial and queer studies and politics (see Jivraj, Bakshi and Posocco, 2020, p.454), demands for disambiguated definitions and articulations of the nascent field of inquiry - i.e., decolonising sexualities - are regular occurrences in academic debates. This essay recapitulates such articulations by providing a genealogy of conversations in disparate geopolitical and disciplinary locations and definitions of terms that have often multiple trajectories and meanings. In so doing, it charts the definitions of decolonial queerness that

emerge from the conjunctive theorisation of decolonial and queer paradigms as well.

Given the overpopulated discourse in academia on decolonisation and other cognate terminology, this chapter attends explicitly to defining and articulating the connections that ensue from two socially relevant theories that overlap and converge towards notions of transformative politics and justice. In addition, eschewing a separate-sphere approach to the two fields of knowledge making, it gestures towards linking decoloniality to queerness in an attempt to "de-link" from disciplinary rigidity, and argues for a common connective thread.   The decolonial perspective, presented as one key aim of this essay, seeks to enact a decolonial critique of transnational queerness by bringing into conversation topics and research areas related to genders and sexualities and racialization politics. In this chapter, a double-pronged approach implicating sexualities, genders, and race in theorisation of decoloniality constitutes a necessary generative paradigm that allows for exercising vigilance apropos of un-/intentional erasures produced in decolonial knowledge and worldmaking.

Connections

Drawing upon and extending Black queer diasporic and queer of colour critiques' affirmation of the 'porous strokes' between 'interdisciplinary projects' pushing forward 'the work, in different sites and forms' (Allen, 2012, p.211; p.214), my insistence on 'connecting' decolonial scholarship to queer theorisation aims to bring in '"unsettled" questions in an ongoing conversation,' thereby responding to 'the challenge of these queer times by claiming intellectual kin where we find them' (Allen, p.215). As Jafari Allen suggests, the connections or what he terms 'conjunctural moments' (p.214), Black queer diaspora studies and queer of colour critique in the work of scholars such as E. Patrick Johnson and Roderick Ferguson enacts 'insurgent rereadings' (p.212). Borrowing conceptually from these connections, this chapter aspires to offer a re-orientation in unsettling and revising

established processes of knowledge-making, subtending a broader span of transformative politics that accords a multi-site, multi-temporal 'epistemic reconstitution', to borrow from Walter Mignolo (2021). Such generative possibilities of connected theorisation do not emerge as novel epistemologies since they have materialised in disparate disciplinary locations in Black queer and diaspora research as 'co-constitutive formations or co-formations' (Bacchetta, Jivraj and Bakshi, 2020, p.574). Extending the proposition of co-productions, I forge connections between two theoretical frames, decolonial and queer studies, that disregard, often at their own peril, the parallel demands of justice and emancipation put forth by each in their own discipline. In so doing, an outline of conjunctive reading is brought forth into view, suturing conceptualisation of 'connected'-ness to decolonial queerness, such that, '"new" ideas and practices emerge and take on added significance precisely because of this articulation' (Allen, p.214).

Decolonisation, not exclusively belonging to our shared pasts, 'is one of the most misunderstood and caricatured intellectual movements' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p.44). Despite signalling multiple temporalities and valorising 'human interconnections' in contrast to colonial difference of humanity perpetuated across time through teleological narratives of progress (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p.44; cf. Frantz Fanon's call to humanity of the 'new man', 2008, and Sylvia Wynter's rejection of the 'biocentric paradigms' of the 'Man/Native dichotomy', 2003, p.329), recent over-investments in the term "decolonisation" have propelled it to the status of either a capacious holdall or an unattainable chimera . Twenty-first century recirculations of the concept 'connect' it to its rootedness in concrete emancipatory land sovereignty movements (Tuck and Yang, 2012) and as a 'practice' of collective resistance to exploitative capitalist modes of being (Cusicanqui, 2012). If certain global North historians usually deploy "decolonisation" to signify either the short period of independence or in the phrase "decolonisation movements", i.e., freedom struggle from formal colonial control, the appreciation of epistemic decolonisation is gradually becoming manifest (see Duara, 2004). Further, given 'the broad range of peoples and

places that seek to engage with decolonisation', Foluke Adebisi elucidates that '"to decolonise" encapsulates a collection of connected activities [...] to fundamentally unseat colonially produced structures of coercive power and technologies of permanent dispossession and dehumanisation that threaten human and planetary survival' (2023, n.p.). Such critical reflections upon connected emancipatory, transformative politics to alter the inter-disciplines catalyse multiple formations of worldmaking in activist mobilisation and academic sites.

The connective thread running across several narratives in disparate geolocations and constituencies is indicative of de-linking from eurocentred knowledge systems, gesturing towards political and cultural emancipation. It instantiates the processes of political emancipation from territorial subjugation of indigenous populations, their right to self-determination from all settler colonialism, from indigenous nations to Palestine and Kashmir amongst other occupations, and the case of reparations that is currently being written in museum studies. Nevertheless, decolonisation movements either for political/economic independence from colonial entities or establishment of national liberation/self-determination offered a principled commitment to emancipation grounded in feminist ethics. Examples of leaders such as B.R. Ambedkar (India), Amílcar Cabral (Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde) and Thomas Sankara (Burkina Faso), to name a few, remind us of the permanent connection between the struggle for formal independence and human rights for all beings. Surely then, within current accounts of decolonisation, critiques of 'multiple hierarchical dimensions of social life (e.g., racial, sexual, gender, economic, political, family, knowledge structures)' have garnered not insufficient attention (Tamale, 2020, p.29; see, for instance, specific critiques from gender and sexuality studies in the work of Anzaldúa, 1987 and Lugones, 2007).

As such, cognitive, economic and political decolonisation as an ongoing process attempts to involve processes of examining our relation to dominant knowledge systems, which inevitably bolster internalised racism, trans/homophobia, (hetero)patriarchy, and anti-Blackness amongst other attributes. Unless our praxes posit

themselves contra such devitalising modalities, through human inter-connectedness, decolonisation remains an elusive enterprise and risks reproducing un/intentional erasures akin to the obliterations, substitutions, and occlusions initiated by colonial systems (Pratt, 2022). The erasures, especially in relation to women's contributions to decolonisation mobilisation and post-independence transformation, have been the subject of focus in Tamale's work vis-à-vis African women's marginalisation in freedom struggles and post-independent nation-building (2020, pp.62-63; see also Philippa Levine's essay 'Gendering Decolonisation', 2010).

One such unintentional erasure constitutes the work of the Nardal sisters, Paulette and Jane Nardal, in 1920s France, who have only recently been recognised as precursors of the Négritude movement. The sisters, especially Paulette Nardal, were central to the organising of the Clamart literary salons in Paris with African-American thinkers and established the bilingual French-English periodical La Revue du Monde Noir in 1931. The exclusion of the Nardal sisters from the Négritude movement is an extraordinary oversight given the nuanced discussions on race, gender and colonialism that regularly featured in the periodical. Paulette Nardal interrogated the erasure of women from the mobilisation thus: 'Césaire and Senghor took up the ideas tossed out by us and expressed them with flash and brio. We were but women, real pioneers; we blazed the trail for them' (Sharpley-Whiting, 2002, p.17). Nardal's complaint constitutes one instance of a genealogy of feminists working in disparate spaces of time to connect racism, sexuality and gender whose contributions are routinely peripheralized in our research agendas. Omitting the contributions of those who fostered demands in anticolonial movements requires necessary revisions such that if modernity conceived as originating in the Euro-US global North comprises a faultline awaiting a necessary corrective, then, in the same vein, the labour of organisers writing gender, sexuality and race into decolonisation struggles cannot be edited out. Within contemporary queer theorisation, Judith Butler's dominant position within the field, including the vast circulation of their works in the global South, has primarily resulted in the erasure of

Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí's formulation of 'woman' as a non-category. Attentive to such redactions, the creation of 'an "other" episteme [which] characterizes decolonial worldmaking' requires connecting narratives of decolonisation to ongoing discussions on queerness that excurse beyond gender and sexuality frames to attach to larger transnational conversations of race, queerness, caste, class, disability inter alia (Jivraj, Bakshi and Posocco, 2020, p.453).

Decolonial studies and decolonisation have multiple trajectories. It is imperative to recognise their convergent and divergent genealogies in order to arrive at a nuanced understanding of praxes, movements and politics. Following Fanon's conceptualisation of the *damné* as 'a subject from whom the capacity to have and to give have been taken away', Nelson Maldonado-Torres charts the labour of decolonisation in restoring this dignity of the *damné* (2007, p.258). Further, Maldonado-Torres engages decolonial thinking in underscoring the diversity of scholars invested in defining the field, pivoting on articulating understandings of the term 'coloniality' nonetheless. Coloniality operates as a legacy of the Euro-colonial worlds in postcolonial times. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni astutely observes, 'racism, the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, and neo-colonialism do not only constitute global coloniality as a modern power structure but are also manifestations of the 'dark side/underside' of modernity' (2020, p.186). In a similar vein, Jairo I. Fúnez-Flores, Ana Carolina Díaz Beltrán and James Jupp posit the multifarious genealogical and intellectual traditions of decolonial studies as a means to address critiques, including auto-critiques, of decolonial praxes and work (2022). In its quest to achieve cognitive justice and liberation, the 'field of decolonial studies has allowed the terms "decolonial" and "decolonize" to become academic and activist catchphrases'; however, 'its multi-route trajectory has enriched peripheral knowledges through their visibilization and dissemination in transnational and transdisciplinary locations' (Jivraj, Bakshi and Posocco, 2020, p.453). This 'multi-route' intellectual genealogy has allowed for a critical expanse to substantialise in the form of connections pertaining to sexuality, gender, race, migration and other social categories of exclusion

inherent in the coloniality of being. Such connections inform the work of a substantial majority of decolonial scholars who, akin to early theorisation from Linda Tuhiwai Smith, insist on how theories about 'research are underpinned by a cultural system of classification and representation [and] by conceptions of gender and race' (1999, p.44; see also, Mignolo, 2007, Maldonado-Torres, 2007, and Lugones's critique of Aníbal Quijano's coloniality of power and inclusion of coloniality of gender, 2007).

Defining a field: Connectors

Race, the 'floating signifier' to borrow a term from Stuart Hall (2021), does not appear as an outlier in decolonial studies. Despite the overarching prevalence of the modernity/coloniality frame in decolonial thinking, both Mignolo and Quijano significantly identify race as enmeshed in the fundamental logic of coloniality (Mignolo, 2018), and 'the most efficient instrument of social domination' (Quijano, 2007, p.45). Earlier anticolonial thinking, for instance in Aimé Césaire's writings, from which decolonial thinking evolved, found an equal inter-implication of race and colonialism, such that Césaire and later Fanon reflected upon the position of blackness and African-ness in their works variously. Recent work that has been included within the remit of decolonial theorisation arises from crossings with Black studies and Indigenous theories. Extending the genealogy of Cedric Robinson's formulation of racial capitalism (1983), Charles Mills' exegesis of white supremacy as a political system (1997), Aileen Moreton-Robinson's engagement of race into questions of settler colonial history and indigeneity (2015), and Patrick Wolfe's reflection on the structures that constructed race as a dominant discourse transnationally (2016), decolonial scholarship attests to the centrality of race that shapes the experiences of indigenous and racialised peoples via the operation of the state, even though they did not produce the history of race. In sum, the proliferation of discussion on race in decolonial theorisation and the racial stratification of the global economy is neither novel nor exclusive to it.

Processes of racialisation in our contemporary eras, an enduring legacy of colonialism, operationalise as a 'technology for the management of human difference, the main goal of which is the production, reproduction, and maintenance of white supremacy on both a local and a planetary scale' (Lentin, 2020, p.5). In her recent research on understanding race and racialisation in the early modern period, Noémie Ndiaye connects racial difference and hierarchy across temporal distinctions of the past and present through an invocation of intertwining global frames of colonisation, such that, racial categorisation 'was a transnational European endeavor' (2022, pp.8-16; p.10). The connection between decolonial theorisation, race and queerness further visibilises when considered in a parallel frame with another analytic of 'human difference', i.e., queer of colour critique. Addressing the 'founding limitation' within canonical queer studies, queer of colour critique orientates 'analyses of sexuality toward critiques of race and political economy' by disambiguating the initial ambivalence within queer studies about the 'connections that sexuality has to other modes of difference' (Ferguson, 2018). Akin to Black feminist conceptualisations of the racialised politics of gender and sexuality, it engages queer analyses into terrains of racial capitalism, transnational queer critiques of hegemonic global North queerness and queerness as archival method, amongst other extensions. In other words, it provides tools for critically analysing sociocultural factors such as race, sexuality, capitalism, class, migration and other variables as an inherent part of queer studies.

Borrowing from feminist, queer, and race studies, queer of colour critique functions as a connecting strand in the geopolitics of knowledge formation. It forefronts the gender/sexuality/race/caste/colonialism nexus, eschewing the idea that they belong to the academic peripheries. The elision of such an inter-relationship renders deficient analyses of social and political epistemologies in multiple academic disciplines and civil-society activism. As Roderick Ferguson suggests, 'queer of color analysis presumes that liberal ideology occludes the intersecting saliency of race, gender, sexuality, and class in forming social practices', and 'attempts to disturb the idea that racial and national formations

are obviously disconnected' (Ferguson, 2003, p.4). As such, queer of colour critique places processes of racialisation and their negative structural bonds at the core of imagining futures that travel beyond standard, desensitised analyses of gender and sexuality.

Akin to queer of colour articulations, Black diasporic queer studies have forged connections activist and academic formulations of Blackness and queer theorisations, incorporating literary and performance studies which appear as fertile sites of excavation of the pasts and projection of collective and connected futures. Introducing 'dramatic instabilities' in politically investing the category of queerness, Rinaldo Walcott re-envisions a/the queer framework as infused by a 'politics of reconnection and reparation' attending to Black livability in the face of Black death (2016, p.14; p.26). The central concern remains the desire for justice and freedom for such a politics to emerge. Borrowing from Édouard Glissant's formulation of natural poetics, Walcott proposes Black queer articulation as 'a homopoetics of relation', which produces 'modes of being that are both in concert with and against hegemonic gay and lesbian identities, homonormative inclusion, and Black homophobia' (p. 197). In this regard, queerness as a mode of identity undergoes a 'shift' to emerge as a politics, an ethics even, to counter the 'limited vocabularies and literacies' of current queer thinking by connecting to and demanding 'a freedom not yet felt, but one genuinely yearned for' (p.208; p.210). In sum, queer of colour critique and Black diasporic queer studies foreground the inveterate connections of sexuality and gender to other modes of difference, broadening the scope of queer studies and in the process clearing space for the emergence of decolonial queerness as analytic through referencing Fanonian and Wynterian new human possibilities of embodiment based on freedom and justice.

Articulations: Planetary Connectedness

Organising around the rubric of queer of colour space-making, Paola Bacchetta et al (2018) explicitly connect the various strands

of knowledge-making manifest in theorising conjunctively. They contend that such enactments incorporate,

> queer of color spaces, including spatial segregation; gentrification; queer of color performance; trans of color politics; travels and translations; theorizing activism; social movements; anti-Blackness; Islamophobia; racisms and racialization; decoloniality; violence; carceral and border regimes; historiography and archives; queer family making and the state; and creative practices including film, visual art, dance, and creative writing. (Bacchetta et al, 2018, p.44)

Noting the myriad thematisations in the preceding citation, it is evident that connections between gender, sexuality, race and nation are embedded in longstanding histories of epistemic and social exclusion, inherited from various colonial expansions, including current settler occupations. Further, the articulation of decolonial theorising of queerness ("decolonial queerness") emanates in the interstitial dialogue between queer and trans of colour activism, activism scholarship, queer and decolonial studies. Within academic institutional sites, it potentialises as strategies to make, share and hold space such that academics 'resist becoming fly-in academics who dismiss antiracist and anticolonial struggles locally and exclusively orient ourselves to the white institution that invites us and pays for our flight' (Bacchetta et al, 2018, p.53). Such critical reflections that connect our multiple positionalities and situational privilege to building a coalitional space of thinking along axes of exclusion and human subjugation appear as one of the key imports in the crossing of decolonial and queer theorisations.

Decolonial queerness departs from standard accounts of queerness to bring into focus ways of being – both knowledge making and worldmaking – that do not solely attach to gender and sexuality formations and critiques. Labouring through normative articulation of queerness, established through hegemonic global North control of what constitutes queer(-ness), such as the primacy of coming-out narratives (as one example), it attaches itself to 'undoing' received understandings of genders

and sexualities. As such, similar to the decolonial option as in the prefix 'de', it 'has a sense of undoing, and undoing also opens a space for a different kind of doing' (Bacchetta and Maese-Cohen, 2010, p.181). In this sense, it commits to undoing 'all relations of power, and is tied up with every dimension of the most subaltern of queer and non-queer life, of humans, all *beings-becoming* and the planet' (Bacchetta, Jivraj and Bakshi, 2020, p.575; emphasis in original). Pointing to the systematic exclusion of non-western, non-white manifestations of queerness as lying outside the purview of queerness itself, such that, the teleological narrative of first-in-the-west and then-the-rest becomes normalised, decolonial queerness is articulated through sustained reliance on decolonial thinking of modernity/coloniality whereby critiques of eurocentred pride (homonationalist exclusions of non-citizens in the geopolitical west) and same-sex marriage and homo-parenting as the ultimate goal for queer mobilisation transnationally become available.

Attempting to decolonise queerness crosses the circumscribed boundaries of gender and sexuality discussions since several social categories of class, race, technologies of (bio)power, caste, and all humanity suffer colonially produced differentiation. The garment workers' conditions in the global South inflected by caste and/or class or the characteristic racialisation of low-paid employment in the global North outline the requirement to consider queerness as one attribute in the struggle against all forms of oppressive structures. Queerness, in this scheme, coalesces with justice and liberation movements, shifting beyond routine and tired calls to equality and representation. The mobilisation against transphobia and homophobia appears in an integral relation to emancipatory organisation. In her pathbreaking contribution to queer legal studies, Tamale offers an assessment of the Fallist movements and earlier Pan-African mobilisation. Decolonisation when considered in relation to such contexts of protesting oppressive structures fails its promise of liberation when not implicating into its frame questions of genders, sexualities, poverty and disabilities among other marginalisations (Tamale, 2020, pp.62-64). Following Tamale, I would propose that the elision of trans and queer frames within social justice movements produces a

significant oversight, authorising exclusions, and in the process, becoming grave impediments to collective emancipation besetting aspirations of these movements. Emancipation or liberation, therefore, of all planetary human/non-human forms is one key tenet of decolonial queerness. It is how queerness inserts itself in narratives of decolonial theorisation and conducts 'connected activities', to borrow from Adebisi (2023).

Queer and trans people of colour inhabiting various regions in the geopolitical west as diasporic subjects appear marginal to thinking of queer politics because of enduring and embedded histories of making borders normative - not just geopolitical borders, but epistemic borders as well. Given the multifarious genealogies of queerness transnationally, a hegemonic formation of queerness, almost normative queerness, has emerged in the global north(s) that arrogates to itself the idea of queer rights and emancipation of queer and trans peoples. Decolonial queerness, extending queer of colour critique, signals not only the immediacy of the need to factor in formations of race, immigration, diasporas and other instances of exclusion, but also, instructs queer analyses to emplace dominant queerness in global processes of control and territorial aggrandisement, which is to say, how queerness in certain instances can be deployed in the service of heteronormative or nationalist politics or discourses of modernity/coloniality. As Bacchetta outlines, 'there is a uni-directionality and unevenness of ideological flows from the global North(s) to the global South(s)' (2020, p.576). However, Bacchetta continues, 'These theories often make sense to a certain relatively dominant sector of feminists and queers in the global South(s) because like their relatively dominant global northern counterparts they do not necessarily consider the most subaltern conditions and subjects' (2020, p.576). Decolonial queerness attends to such complicities in circulations of power in both the North(s) and South(s). In this regard, it sutures to all notions of justice, be they restorative, reparative or transformative and its attributes.

The example of same-sex marriage and the human rights frame continues to generate discussions in the geopolitical west and in

the global South(s) where countries have recently decriminalised homosexual acts (e.g., current debates on same-sex marriage in India). Human rights do not constitute a proprietary domain of the geopolitical west, even though it claims this frame for itself. The over-emphasis on equal rights, same-sex marriage and adoption/homoparenting in mainstream queer movements has mainly become an instantiation of a teleological narrative of progress, attributing to the west the advantage of claiming a moral high ground. The deployment of decolonial queerness in this context functions as an analytic - an analytic that describes the events and conditions regimenting queer politics. The current export of homophobia via the Christian church in countries such as Uganda, for instance, energises hostilities against queer and transgender people with adverse ramifications for local organisations on the ground. The analytic goes beyond a simple observation-description-critique by departing from these narratives not as an attempt to undermine discourses on equality. Instead, it brings into focus movements for socio-economic justice that are often co-tangent to political demands of same-sex equality but are part of a wider network of decolonial resistance, globally. Decolonial queerness constitutes then in its deployment as a strategy of resistance to the harnessing of queer and transgender subjects in the dynamics of power hierarchies, all hierarchies.

The plurality of planetary existence invites us to rethink the North/South binary as a useful categorisation. However, both geopolitical locations contain multiply divided socio-political constituencies whose classification necessitates careful qualifications. There are pockets of the global North (affluent classes, gated communities) in the global South and vice versa (inner-city poverty). Plural ways of being and becoming define the multiplicity of ways of resistance and control. Since there are several Norths and Souths, it is imperative to note that decolonial queerness does not constitute a singular strategy or tool. It is a set of practices and, in this sense, it might be significant to phrase it 'decolonial queernesses'. As the Decolonizing Sexualities Network put it, it comprises an assemblage of 'plural strategies of resistance' (Jivraj, Bakshi and Posocco, 2002, p.455). Certainly,

local mobilisation in all its plural manifestations gain precedence over a particularised, singular version of global queerness. For instance, transgender communities and caste-oppressed groups in India denounce the absence of anti-casteism-as-emancipation in queer mobilisation in the country, since trans/queer liberation is firmly tethered to the liberation from caste structures. As Akhil Kang observes, 'a dalit-queer understanding of desire does not transcend the violent histories of caste or remain tangential to them but becomes central to remembering and articulating these histories' (2023, pp.66-67). Writing decolonial queerness in India, therefore, implies the critique of colonial and postcolonial power structures in place through which Brahminical heteropatriarchy authoritatively regiments discourse on all sexualities and caste supremacy. The recognition of this constitutive element of social life, of all life in India, would allow a move beyond global queer imperatives and begin the labour of dismantling caste structures as a primary task of queer and trans-organisation.

Operating as an epistemic tool by indicating the faultlines in strategies of inclusion or in emancipatory "ideals" of a monolithic global queerness, decolonial queerness advocates a political stance of resistance to them not solely based on refusal but also on deprivileging queerness as a facile nominal identity. Extricating oneself from relations of coloniality or other forms of dominance necessitates unsettling relations of power to embark on a process of healing. Since decolonial studies place the accent on healing from the colonial wound, decolonising queerness consists of resistance to homophobia and transphobia, an active production of established heteronormative hierarchies such that queer and transgender people survive, heal and thrive in the midst of planetary life in the Norths and Souths. Decolonial queerness enables us to contemplate those modalities of existence that are not systematically tethered to a hierarchical organisation of our worlds. In other words, it is used as political praxis based on the transformative potential of two theorisations, that of queer and decolonial.

Pursuing the intellectually generative possibilities of transnational feminisms, Black queer studies and queer of colour critiques,

decolonial queerness clears space for the shift in envisioning queerness. Such a move implies that queerness-as-politics replaces queerness-as-identity. In so doing, it aligns queerness with decolonial thinking that fashions itself as practice and politics. Additionally, eschewing the co-optation of queer subjects in the global scheme of mobilising queer subjects-as-victims of Islam in Muslim countries, it remains alert to such recuperative attempts to silence critique of wars in the global North and, forges connections with all oppressed communities in Palestine, Kashmir or other occupations. Such devious instances of right-wing machinations have been emergent in postcolonial states such as India where both decolonial and queer theorisations are currently being mobilised as part of the fundamentalist Hindutva agenda. Decolonial queerness as a practice, then, enacts a politics of refusal to partake in conversations that result in maintaining the status quo of coloniality of power, thinking, knowledge and being, offering solidarity to communities engaged in their self-emancipation and determination instead.

Decolonial queerness is one amongst a multitude of analytics and in this regard possesses the potential to re-energize our thinking of all hierarchies. It will be overambitious to state that it will save the world; it eschews such grand narratives of saviourism. Instead, it remains a productive possibility and operates akin to the decolonial option as only one option amongst many. As a coalitional possibility, decolonial queerness works towards forging alliances with other constituencies and analytics/analyses that are not conventionally regarded as queer at all: race, military and political occupations, indigenous forms of knowledges, disability mobilisation, neo-colonial capitalism, caste structures inter alia. It assertively fosters connections between queerness and other forms of human/non-human taxonomies. Refusing a critique of extant relations of power without informed objectives, it labours to construct coalitions with political mobilisation positioned towards achieving social transformation, whilst continuously foregrounding non-normative genders and sexualities. As with current social justice imperatives, it does not solely aim to achieve equality - even though that agenda is fundamental to the promise of its possibility - but aspires to modify the conversation

itself by bringing into dialogue the significance of transformative coalitional politics and emancipatory mobilisation in order to enact liberation for all from the stronghold of power and oppression. Decolonial queerness wills us to imagine our worlds in a co-constitutive manner towards a collective movement to liberation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adebisi, F., 2023. *What is Decolonisation?* [online] Available at: <https://folukeafrica.com/what-is-decolonisation/> [Accessed 9 March 2023].

Allen, J.S., 2012. Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Juncture. *GLQ*, 18(2-3): pp. 211-248.

Anzaldúa, G., 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.

Bacchetta, P., Jivraj, S., and Bakshi, S., 2020. Decolonial Sexualities: Paola Bacchetta in conversation with Suhraiya Jivraj and Sandeep Bakshi. *Interventions*, 22(4): pp.574–585.

Bacchetta, P., El-Tayeb, F., Haritaworn, J., Hernandez, J., Smythe, S., Thompson, V.E., and Willoughby-Herard, T., 2018. Queer of Color Space-Making in and beyond the Academic Industrial Complex. *Critical Ethnic Studies*, 4(1): pp.44–63.

Bacchetta, P. and Maese-Cohen, P., 2010. Decolonial Praxis: Enabling Intranational and Queer Coalition Building. *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, 18(2): pp.147–192.

Cusicanqui, S.R., 2012. Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 111(1): pp.95–109.

Duara, P., ed., 2004. *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*. London: Routledge.

Fanon, F., 2008 [1952]. *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Ferguson, R.A., 2018. Queer of Color Critique. *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*. [online] Available at:

<https://oxfordre.com/literature/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780 190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-33> [Accessed 13 March 2023].

Ferguson, R.A., 2004. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Fúnez-Flores, J., Díaz Beltrán, A.C., and Jupp, J., 2022. Decolonial Discourses and Practices: Geopolitical Contexts, Intellectual Genealogies, and Situated Pedagogies. *Educational Studies*, 58(5-6): pp.596–619.

Hall, S., 2021. Race, the Floating Signifier: What More Is There to Say about "Race"? In Gilroy, P., and Gilmore, R.W. (eds.), *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*. By Stuart Hall. Durham, NC: Duke University Press: pp.359–373.

Jivraj, S., Bakshi, S. and Posocco, S., 2020. Decolonial Trajectories: Praxes and Challenges. *Interventions*, 22(4): pp.451-463.

Kang, A., 2023. Savarna Citations of Desire: Queer Impossibilities of Inter-Caste Love. *Feminist Review*, 133(1): pp. 63-78.

Lentin, A., 2020. *Why Race Still Matters*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Levine, P., 2010. Gendering Decolonisation. *Histoire@Politique*, 11(2). [online] Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3917/hp.011.0009> [Accessed 10 March 2023].

Lugones, M., 2007. Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System. *Hypatia*, 22(1): pp.186-209.

Maldonado-Torres, N., 2007. On the Coloniality of Being. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3): pp.240-270.

Mignolo, W., 2021. *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mignolo, W., 2018. Racism and Coloniality: The Invention of "HUMAN(ITY)" and the Three Pillars of the Colonial Matrix of Power (Racism, Sexism, and Nature). In Taylor, P., Alcoff, L., and

Anderson, L. (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Race*. New York, NY: Routledge: pp.461-474.

Mignolo, W., 2007. Delinking. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2/3): pp.449–514.

Mills, C.W., 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Moreton-Robinson, A., 2015. *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Ndiaye, N., 2022. *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S., 2018. *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization*. London: Routledge.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S., 2020. Global Coloniality and the Challenges of Creating African Futures. *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 36(2): pp. 181-202.

Oyěwùmí, O., 1997. *Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Pratt, M.L., 2022. *Planetary Longings*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Quijano, A., 2007. Questioning "Race". *Socialism and Democracy*, 21(1): pp.45-53.

Robinson, C., 1983. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. London: Zed Books.

Sharpley-Whiting, T.D., 2002. *Negritude Women*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Tamale, S., 2020. *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*. Ottawa: Daraja Press.

Tuck, E., and Yang, K.W., 2012. Decolonization is not a Metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* I, no. 1: pp.1-40.

Tuhiwai Smith, L., 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Walcott, R., 2016. *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies*. London, Ontario: Insomnia Press.

Wolfe, P., 2016. *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*. London: Verso Books.

Wynter, S., 2003. Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation - An Argument. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3(3): pp.257-337.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Sandeep Bakshi researches on transnational queer and decolonial enunciation of knowledges. He received his PhD from the School of English, University of Leicester, UK, and is currently employed as an Associate Professor of Decolonial, Postcolonial and Queer Studies at Université Paris Cité. He coordinates two research seminars, "Peripheral Knowledges" and "Empires, Souths, Sexualities," and heads the Pôle Société Civile of the Cité du Genre Institute, Université Paris Cité. Co-editor of *Decolonizing Sexualities: Transnational Perspectives, Critical Interventions* (Oxford: Counterpress, 2016) and 'Decolonial Trajectories', a special issue of *Interventions* (2020), he has published on queer and race problematics in postcolonial literatures and cultures. He is a founding member of and serves on the board of the Decolonizing Sexualities Network (https://decolonizingsexualities.org).

RACHAEL SCALLY

The Early Years of the Edinburgh Medical School and Royal Infirmary: Slavery, Medicine, and Philanthropy in Scotland, c.1726-1879

Introduction

In 2011, the historian T. M. Devine posed the question 'did slavery make Scotia great?' (Devine, 2011). This article argues that it certainly helped to. It examines how the Edinburgh Medical School and Royal Infirmary benefitted financially from chattel slavery. It investigates how charitable donations and legacies from individuals who derived their wealth either wholly, mainly, or partly from slavery and the trade in goods related to its practice, helped to finance the building and improvement of both institutions. The medical school and infirmary produced generations of medical practitioners who supported and propagated slavery and imperialism in the British empire, while growing wealthy from the fees of students who hailed from the colonies. The paper reveals how the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary benefitted economically from the ownership and stolen labour of enslaved people on its Redhill Pen in Jamaica and examines the financial gifts and support that came from the infirmary's network of wealthy contacts and donors in Scotland, England, the West Indies, and to a lesser extent the American colonies. It

demonstrates that the infirmary's financial connection to chattel slavery endured from its foundation well into the latter half of the nineteenth century. While it was not possible to reconstruct the lives of the people who were enslaved by the infirmary, surviving archival material, although scant, does allow us to gain at least a little insight into the workings of the Redhill Pen and what life may have entailed for captives such as Betsy Coghlan and Juliet.

The Edinburgh Medical School

The Edinburgh Medical School was founded in 1726 by an act of the Town Council. It stood unrivalled as the most vibrant medical faculty in Britain and Ireland until the early nineteenth century and its reputation for excellence was challenged only by Leiden (see Anderson, 1976; Comrie, Miles & Ritchie, 1921; Dingwall, 2010; Emerson, 2004; Kauffman, 2003; Rosner, 1991). The Scottish capital attracted large numbers of international students and offered a medical education often unavailable to students in their own countries. Throughout the eighteenth century, Edinburgh was a hub of intellectual and scientific activity and its medical school was the jewel in the university's crown (Schwartz, 2021). Its foundation was, in part, a deliberate policy to bolster the economy and improve the city by attracting foreign students and retaining Scottish ones, who at that time typically completed their medical education on the continent at great expense. By the 1750s the university was home to around 300 medical students – half of the entire student body – and by 1793 this figure had risen to 427, out of a matriculated student population of 751 (Phillipson, 2003, p.77, pp.82-3).

The university offered a full complement of lectures and one of the first courses in Europe in clinical medicine (Brockliss, 2010, p.40). At Edinburgh's new medical school, future physicians, surgeons and apothecaries, as well as those who would go on to specialise in other fields, such as botany, natural history or chemistry, rubbed shoulders on the faculty benches and gathered together in the course of their training at the hospital, the famous Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. The medical school's reputation

flourished as a succession of brilliant professors were appointed, such as William Cullen (1710-90), James Gregory (1753-1821), and Joseph Black (1728-99), the discoverer of carbon dioxide.

188 students from America and the West Indies are recorded as graduating from Edinburgh during the eighteenth century (*List of the Graduates in Medicine in the University of Edinburgh from MDCCV. to MDCCCLXVI*, 1867; Lewis, 1888; Ferguson, 1974). The Medical School was a particular draw for students from the enslaving American colonies of Virginia, Maryland, Carolina and Pennsylvania and the Caribbean islands of Jamaica, Antigua, Barbados and St. Kitts, who arrived with letters of introduction in hand and money in their pockets. In terms of the West Indies, Edinburgh drew the greatest number of graduates from the island of Jamaica (almost 30%). However, the number of students who studied medicine without graduating, as was then common, was considerably higher. Sheridan (1985, p.60), for example, estimates that between 1744 and 1830, 219 students from the West Indies graduated from Edinburgh and an additional 259 matriculated. Large numbers of Scottish, English, and Irish students who studied at Edinburgh also travelled to gain employment in the West Indies. Scottish medical graduates and students of the University of Edinburgh were especially valued due to the large Scottish diaspora there and the known quality of Edinburgh's medical education (Hamilton, Thompson & MacKenzie, 2005, pp.112-139). Those lacking the necessary finances to practice in Scotland or England could also work as Guinea surgeons on the Middle Passage. Guinea surgeons, such as Scotland's Archibald Dalzel (1740-1811), worked on British vessels employed in the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans (Akinjogbin, 1966; Sheridan, 1981). In 1791, Dalzel, whose brother was Andrew Dalzel, Professor of Greek at the University of Edinburgh, became Governor of the notorious Cape Coast Castle and eventually became a trader of enslaved people himself. The pair corresponded regularly on issues relating to the trade and these letters are held at the Edinburgh University Library Special Collections (see GB 237 Coll-189).[1]

---

[1] Many thanks to Grant Buttars, University Collections Archivist, for drawing my attention to this connection.

The wealth from slavery enriched the university, infirmary, and city with money being spent on rent, books, instruments, clothes, and of course socialising. By the 1790s Phillipson estimates that to live in a 'genteel manner' it cost the average student £10 a quarter or £20 for the winter session for bed and board alone (2003, p.84).

Money was also sent back to the university by grateful alumni who had made successful lives for themselves in the Caribbean as a result of enslavement. For example, during the late eighteenth century the university buildings were so dilapidated that one visitor compared them to stables and the Principal William Robertson to 'alms-houses for the reception of the poor' and so a public subscription was established to finance the building of a New College (now known as Old College), whose foundation stone was laid in November 1789 (Fraser, 1989, p.27; Edinburgh University Archives: *An Account of the Ceremony of Laying the Foundation Stone of the New College of Edinburgh, November 16 1789*, A-761, Da 32.1.14). A number of the donors had connections to slavery and some to both slavery and the medical school itself. Lieutenant General Melville (1723-1809), who had studied medicine at Edinburgh, for example, had substantial properties in Grenada and Tobago, and the surgeon Alexander Crichton (1763-1859), who matriculated at the university and attended the infirmary, owned a number of estates in Jamaica (EUA: Subscription Papers of November 2 1789. A list of those who have already subscribed, March 5 1790. A-761, Da 32.1.8; Edinburgh City Archives: University Committee Minute Book 1789-1801, Loose volumes on shelf, 9/41, L234).

Graduates of Edinburgh went on to establish medical schools in Pennsylvania, Yale, Columbia and Harvard – institutions which are all presently engaged in efforts to confront their historical involvement in slavery (Wilson, 1929; Bell, 1950). Yet, the idea that the Edinburgh Medical School, university, or its associated institutions could be regarded as having ties to slavery had not, until very recently, been seriously contemplated, let alone systematically interrogated (for notable exceptions, see Royal

College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 2021; Buck, 2022; to learn about the seminal UncoverED project, see UncoverED, 2023).

This article is primarily the result of research conducted during my time as the 2021 Daiches-Manning Fellow in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies and is based on my IASH work-in-progress talk. To the best of my knowledge, this was the first ever funded postdoctoral fellowship to investigate the complex connections between slavery and medicine at the University of Edinburgh. In 2022 three further fellowships were established at IASH to examine the university's historical links to enslavement, colonialism and its racial legacies, and the Lothian Health Service commissioned an independent review to fully document the hospital's historic ties to the Atlantic trade in enslaved people. In 2022 the Edinburgh Futures Institute also funded a pilot project to investigate the links between the building of the new Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, which first opened on Lauriston Place in 1879, and slavery. The project (PI: Professor Diana Paton; RA: Dr Rachael Scally) focused on the subscriptions raised for the construction of the new hospital. The newly renovated building is now home to the Edinburgh Futures Institute. The project's findings will also be discussed in this essay.

The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh

The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh was instrumental in consolidating the reputation of the university and medical school as a centre of medical excellence and Enlightenment (Risse, 1986; Turner, 1937; Romanes,1979; Catford, 1984; RCPE: Barfoot, Clinical Medicine at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in the Eighteenth Century, BAM/1). The Edinburgh Infirmary for Sick Poor or 'Little House', as it was then known, opened in 1729 on Robertson's Close, becoming the first voluntary hospital in Scotland and one of only a handful of others in Ireland and Great Britain, such as London's Westminster (1719) and Dublin's Charitable Infirmary (1718). In 1736 the hospital received its Royal Charter from King George II and became officially known as the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. In 1741 the infirmary moved to a larger site on Jamaica Street,

(between Infirmary Street and Drummond Street) where it stood at the heart of an intellectual hub (Ainslie, 1780).[2] This area included the Surgeons' Hall, the Royal Medical Society and the university's anatomy theatre, chemistry laboratory, and physics garden. It was also home to some of the city's extra-academical medical schools. This neighbourhood bristled with Edinburgh's many medical students.

In contrast to countries such as France, where health care was supported by the government, the infirmary was part of the eighteenth-century voluntary hospital movement, during which many hospitals were founded through philanthropy to improve the health of the sick and deserving poor, and the economic well-being of the nation. From the outset it was fused with the scientific, educational, and improving ideals of the Enlightenment. Its physicians and surgeons offered their service for free and the hospital was reliant on charitable donations, subscriptions, and legacies. The hospital was also supported by money raised from the sale of student admission tickets, which cost two guineas a piece and permitted the bearers to follow their teachers on their rounds or to 'walk the wards' as it was commonly known. After 1756, admission fees increased from 2 to 3 guineas. In 1745, student fees accounted for around 8% of the infirmary's income, a figure which rose to an estimated 20% in 1770 and to 33% by 1790 (RCPE: Barfoot, BAM/1). In 1751 the hospital moved from a voluntary to a salaried staff, appointing two physicians-in-ordinary. By the 1770's these posts were lucrative and coveted, with the senior physician collecting £90 a year and the junior physician taking home £50. In 1769 four salaried ordinary surgeons were appointed who were paid £20 a year. (Risse, 1986, pp.60-64).

The need for a hospital in Edinburgh was first set out in a 1721 pamphlet by a group of gentlemen which was believed to have included the surgeon Alexander Monro primus, Professor of

---

[2] Jamaica Street does not appear on William Edgar's (fl.1717-1746) map of the city in 1765 but does appear on John Ainslie's in 1780. This means that we can trace its appearance to somewhere between 1765 and 1780. Many thanks to Anthony Lewis from Glasgow Museums for this insight. Thanks also to Kirsten McKee and Lucy Crabb at the National Library for their help in relation to this matter.

Anatomy (Kaufman, 2003, p.39). In 1725, with the backing of the College of Physicians and Edinburgh's wealthy improving elites, an appeal was launched with the aim of collecting £2,000 to fund the building of a hospital. The appeal attracted 352 subscribers. The list included legal professionals, university professors, ministers, merchants and, as would be expected, medical practitioners. There was even a fair sprinkling of the Scottish upper classes, and women too featured on the list (*An Account of the Rise and Establishment of the Infirmary, or Hospital for Sick-Poor, erected at Edinburgh*, 1730).

A close examination of this list shows that there was an overlap between the individuals and families who invested in the infirmary and the failed Darien Scheme, which was founded in 1695 to give Scottish merchants and investors the opportunity to rival the monopolies of the East India and Royal African Companies and was intended to license slaving voyages. Several subscribers were also investors in companies such as those mentioned above who profited from trading in enslaved African people (*List of the Subscribers to the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies...*, 1697). For instance, Adam Cockburn, Lord Ormiston (1656-1735), the Scottish administrator and judge, and John Hamilton, Lord Belhaven (d.1764), were investors in the Royal African Company (Symon, 1739, p.87). Merchant John Drummond of London (1676-1742) was a director of the East India Company from 1722-34 and sat on the court of assistants at the East African Company in 1722 (Lea, 1970). One of the most valuable items in his will was a gold cup given to him by the E.I.C. bearing their arms on one side and his own on the other (The National Archives: Will of John Drummond, PROB 11/722/407). One subscriber, John Cathcart was a partner with John Blackwood (c.1698-1777) in the London firm Blackwood Cathcart which was involved in the trade of enslaved people (Sedgwick (a), 1970). Alexander Blackwood, John Blackwood's brother was also a subscriber and a creditor to the company. Blackwood Cathcart ran an illicit trade in wood via Kingston, Jamaica and were licensed by the South Sea Company to engage in trading enslaved people in Yucatan (Scottish Court of Session, 1763). There is little doubt that the men mentioned

above derived, at the very least a portion, if not a sizable chunk of their wealth, from slavery.

In 1738 the infirmary's minutes report that a letter was read bringing news that a subscription for donations had been established in London by 'some worthy and charitable persons' who had advertised in the London papers and would collect the pledges and donations (Lothian Health Board, Managers' Minutes, 1/1/1, 6 December 1738). The aim was to finance the construction of a new larger and better equipped hospital. A list of correspondents who were commissioned to work on the infirmary's behalf included members of a Scottish elite in London, several of whom were investors in company's who profited from trafficking enslaved Africans. The letter stated that donations should be given to banker Andrew Drummond and transmitted by him to the infirmary (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/1, 6 December 1738). Drummond (1688-1769) was born in Perthshire and was a goldsmith and founder of Drummonds Bank in Charing Cross, London, which eventually became part of the Royal Bank of Scotland. Drummond was a holder of E.I.C. stock (McGilvary, 2016, p.146; Winterbottom, 2010)

Other Scottish investors and speculators trading in the West End area of London included the Edinburgh-born banker George Middleton (1692-1747). Middleton served his apprenticeship as a goldsmith in Edinburgh and in 1703 joined John Campbell, a Scottish goldsmith in the Strand. Prior to the collapse of the South Sea Company in 1720, Middleton was consistently in the top ten traders of E.I.C. stock (Healey, 2004; Neil, 1994; Mays & Shea, 2011, p.64). Other significant Scottish figures included Claud Johnston and Neil Buchanan (c.1696–1744). Johnston, previously an Edinburgh merchant, worked as an agent in London for the Scots involved in the trade of enslaved people and was responsible for purchasing the core cargo of essential Guinea goods, such as copper bars, pewter, ceramic beads, gunpowder, guns, and swords for the African traders, and for hiring surgeons and crew (Graham, E.J., 2005, pp.70-71). Neil Buchanan (c.1696–1744), who became a powerful tobacco merchant in London and Virginia was mentioned in the minutes as being a correspondent

and commissioner of the hospital, as was Lord Archibald Hamilton (1673-1754), the former Governor of Jamaica from 1710-16, whose family seat was at Lanarkshire (Sedgwick(b), 1970; Southey, 1827, p.204).

The most significant of the Scots in London was Adam Anderson (c.1692-1765). Anderson worked as a clerk for forty years at South Sea House, the headquarters of the South Sea Company and he was the infirmary's official agent in London (Chamber & Thomson, 1857, pp.52-3). This job involved encouraging and collecting donations, corresponding with the Scottish diaspora and others in the colonies, and publicising the cause by advertising in the London papers and elsewhere. For example, he would arrange for drawings and plans for the new hospital to be sent to 'people of substance' and hung at eye-catching places in London, such as its popular coffee houses (LHB: Adam Anderson to RIE, 1/72/7/16a-b, 30 January 1752; LHB: Adam Anderson to William Cochrane, 1/72/2/16a-c, 13 December 1748; LHB: Adam Anderson to Gavin Hamilton, 1/72/3/12a-c, 25 November 1749). Like George Drummond (1688-1766), who was known as 'Father of the Infirmary' and also served six times as Lord Provost, Adam Anderson was an extremely important and influential figure in the infirmary's history. However, it must be noted that Anderson and those discussed above are but a handful of the hospital's more prominent eighteenth-century resident British benefactors and much further investigation is needed, particularly in relation to the infirmary's many donors on this side of the Atlantic, if a true picture of the extent and nature of its financial ties to slavery is to be established.

Archibald Ker and the Redhill Pen in Jamaica

It was at a meeting on 9 July 1750 that the infirmary first became aware of the substantial and unique bequest which had been left to it on the island of Jamaica. At the meeting George Drummond informed the managers that he had received a copy of a letter from Dr William MacFarlane, an Edinburgh physician (LHB:

Managers' Minutes, 1/1/3, 9 July). The letter had been sent by Dr MacFarlane's brother, Alexander (1702-1755), a wealthy merchant in Jamaica who was also a benefactor of the infirmary. The letter stated that Archibald Ker, a Scottish surgeon from St Thomas-in-the-East, near Kingston, had died leaving his estate to the Infirmary of Edinburgh ('Archbould or Archibald Kerr', 2022; 'Red Hill', 2022).[3] However, in Wallis (1988, p.341) Ker is listed as an apothecary.

Shortly after receiving McFarlane's letter, Ker's appointed executors wrote to the hospital officially informing them of the bequest and enclosing a copy of Ker's will together with an appraisal of his estate (LHB: James Barclay to Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, 1/72/5/5a-b., 22 October 1750; LHB: Will and Testament of Archibald Ker, Late of the Parish of St Thomas in the East, Jamaica, 1/72/5/7a-b, 1749). In his will Ker appointed as his executors his friend James Barclay (d.1765), a wealthy merchant in Kingston and patron of the hospital, William Forbes (d.1762) the owner of at least 600 acres of land in St Thomas-in-the-East, and merchant William Baillie, also from the Parish (LHB: Will & Testament of Archibald Ker, 1/72/5/7a-b, 1749; 'James Barclay', 2022). All of Ker's executors were part of a Scottish network in St Thomas-in-the-East and Kingston, who had made their fortunes from owning enslaved people and the trade in goods produced by enslaved workers.

In his will Ker left £500 Jamaican currency to William Forbes and gave to his 'trusted Negro man slave called Jeremy his freedom', which was ordered to be immediately granted upon his demise, together with an annual allowance of £5 Jamaican currency and 50 square yards of land in a remote corner of the estate (LHB: Will, 1/72/5/7a-b, 1749). He went on to bequeath 'the annual profits of his estate (real and personal) towards and for the use of the Royal Infirmary at Edinburgh'. To this Ker added a codicil, an addition that would soon become a source of endless legal controversy for the infirmary. Ker stipulated that as soon as the lease of his estate

---

[3] Very little is known about Ker's life and sources such as the Legacies of British Slavery Database and the Lothian Health Services RIE archives spell Ker's last name as both 'Ker' and 'Kerr'. This article will use 'Ker' as it is the spelling that appears in his will and in RIE's early correspondence and minutes. It is also the spelling used for his book subscriptions.

and enslaved workforce, which were then hired out, expired 'they may be kept upon the said estate land there employed and the estate together with the slaves again leased or hired out to the highest bidder'. The annual profits from this were to be remitted to the infirmary by his executors. Ker went on to further specify that it was his 'resolute intention and desire that the said estate be kept and not sold or otherwise disposed of'. Legally this meant that the infirmary had been gifted an estate it could never sell, together with an enslaved workforce that it could presumably neither sell nor emancipate (LHB: James Barclay to Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, 1/72/8/12a-c, 7 December 1751).

Especially at the start of the infirmary's ownership, rent was paid sporadically, communication was difficult, and the minutes demonstrate that the infirmary was at first keen to sell the property and the enslaved people upon it. However, they were not only aware that their current legal position prevented this but it was ultimately thought that a greater profit could be had by leasing than selling. They also did not want to discourage further bequests from the colonies or elsewhere by deviating from Ker's wishes. A petition to the House of Lords in 1806 to allow the infirmary to sell the property for £7,000 does not appear to have been realised (*Journal of the House of Lords*, 1805, p.740). Even a plea by one Dr Moodie in 1773 to be permitted to buy the enslaved Juliet from Ker's Pen was denied, as they were doubtful it could be done legally by the method proposed and were 'of opinion it would be liable to be challenged afterwards' (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/4, 25 October 1773). Later in 1793 Dr Moodie again petitioned the infirmary, this time to beg for the emancipation of his sons John and William Moodie, but no further mention of the case or its outcome is mentioned (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/6, 2 December 1793). While there is no evidence to suggest that coercion or sexual violence took place at Redhill, it must remain a possibility as abuse and rape were common features of life for many enslaved women.

Ker's legacy, particularly in its early years was held in very high esteem by the hospital and was seen as a proud mark of Scotland's colonial power. The rent accounted for a significant

portion of the hospital's annual income. For example, in 1781-2 the income from Ker's estate accounted for around 10.5% of the infirmary's overall annual income. Ker's bequest was so well-esteemed that when an original portrait of Dr Ker was located the treasurer quickly purchased it for six guineas and hung it in pride of place in the middle of the board room (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/3, 4 July 1757). The portrait of Kerr is still owned by NHS Lothian (see Mosma, c.1730).

Ker's personal estate was appraised at £3,412 Jamaican currency (or around £2,437 sterling), which according to the Bank of England's Inflation Calendar is around £426,948 in today's money (LHB1/1/3, Managers' Minutes, 23 January 1751; Bank of England Inflation Calculator, 2022; Denzel, 2010, p.445).[4] His personal effects consisted of a mahogany table, some pictures, a copper kettle, glasses, plates, chairs, a feather mattress, a mosquito net and a backgammon table, items which were only appraised at a few Jamaican pounds each. While there was no mention of a library, we know that Ker subscribed to three different editions of George Mackenzie's *The Lives and Characters of the Most Eminent Writers of the Scots Nation*, which was published in 1708, 1711, and 1722 (Robinson & Wallis, 1975). His most expensive possession was his New England horse, which was valued at £10 Jamaican currency. New England horses were in demand in the sugar colonies for crushing the sugarcane and turning the mills (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/3, 23 January 1751; Carrington-Farmer, 2019). It seems that Ker was resident on his pen, something that was more common in the early days of British colonisation.

The lion's share of the value of Ker's estate, however, came from the 39 enslaved, who were valued at £2,115 Jamaican currency (or around £1,510 sterling), which is just short of £264,543 in today's money (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/3, 23 January 1751). Philip D. Morgan (1995, p.49) estimates that in the mid eighteenth century,

---

[4] I have used the Bank of England Inflation Calculator for all the calculations in this article. However, 'Measuring Worth' (https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ukcompare/), an on-line calculator which provides a range of ways of calculating present-day value, is an alternative and well-respected tool used by economic historians. All calculations in this article should be considered estimates only.

the median number of enslaved people on a pen in Jamaica was 43, so at 39 Ker's pen would have been more or less of average size. Of the 39 enslaved, 21 were men and 18 were women. Two of the 39 were listed as children. The men were valued the highest, with tradesmen such as Oxford and Caesar being valued at £100 Jamaican currency apiece. The historian Jack Greene estimates that in 1751 the average Jamaican enslaved worker cost £25 sterling or around £35 in Jamaican currency (Greene, 2016, p.12). The average enslaved labourer on the Ker pen cost considerably more at around £38 sterling, which could reflect its greater number of skilled workers.

Once purchased, captives were named by their enslavers and the names of the enslaved on Ker's pen were typical. European names in their diminutive such as Lucy and Bob featured, as did Roman ones, like Hercules and Venus. Place names, such as Kingston, Scotland, Berwick, and Edinburgh also made an appearance (Burnard, 2001; Burton, R.D.E., 1999). However, popular African names like Mimba or Quashee, which enslaved people were occasionally permitted to keep, did not feature. The slave returns of 1817, 1820, 1823, 1826, and 1832 show that 44 children were born to the enslaved women on the pen and that the number of births was slightly higher than the number of deaths - a statistic not shared with the women working on Jamaica's sugar plantations, where life was so severe that reproduction was difficult and death was a constant presence (Jamaica Archives and Records Department: Slave Returns, T71/145, 844-846; T71/146, 476; T71/147, 363; T71/148, 355-356, T71/150, 515).

Enslaved people were trafficked to Jamaica via the notorious Middle Passage across the Atlantic, which lasted around 80 days. An estimated 15% died at sea and the total number of deaths directly attributable to the voyage is thought to be over two million. The median slaving vessel measured 86 feet long and 24 feet wide, with a deck height of 5 feet, 2 inches and a crew of between 40 and 50, who stood guard over between 300 and 600 enslaved people (The Saint Lauretia Project, 2022). In order to maximise profits, the traders packed as many people as possible into cramped spaces below deck. People were shackled together

lying down, with no space to sit or stand and conditions were unbearable (Equiano, 2009). In the case of Redhill's enslaved Africans, such as Mary Francis and Betsy Coghlan, they likely found themselves at Kingston, Jamaica's largest port, along with the hogsheads of rum, sugar, and tobacco waiting to be exported.

Redhill consisted of 420 acres in the sugar parish of St Thomas-in-the-East, near Morant Bay at the east of the island, around 27 miles from Kingston (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/3, 23 January 1751). According to the historian Jack Greene (2016, pp.53-4) in the 1750s, only seven parishes in Jamaica exceeded the island-wide mean of 32 sugar plantations per parish and with a grand total of 59, St. Thomas-in-the-East had the island's fifth highest number. It was also home to 108 sugar mills, the fourth highest number on the island, with 85 being driven by cattle.

The property was a pen, as opposed to a plantation. While the best land was used for the more profitable business of growing sugar cane, coffee, and tobacco, pens were devoted to rearing livestock for the larger estates. Next to labour, livestock was the second most valuable commodity that a planter could possess. Livestock was valuable for transporting goods and people, manure for the sugar cane, for breeding and food. Shepherd (2009, xxiii) estimates that there were around 300 pens on the island in 1782, which were smaller in size than estates.

Shepherd (2009, xxxvi) argued that work on a pen would have been more varied, flexible and less brutal than work on a plantation, as work was not tied as closely to the crop cycle and the use of gang labour. The enslaved on a pen would have tended animals in the day, herded them into pens at night, worked as watchmen, transporting them to plantations or to market when the time came. Other jobs included clearing land for pasture, chopping wood, repairing fences, and maintaining animal sheds. Enslaved women, worked as housekeeper performing tasks such as preparing food, washing laundry, sewing, and cleaning. Both men and women planted, tended, and harvested crops as food for people and animals.

Yet, even if we do accept, as argued, that life on a pen was likely less harsh than on a plantation, it still relied on chattel slavery and was part of an economy that relied on the exploitation and management of a black majority population by a minority white ruling elite. Life on a pen still meant a life of subjugation, enforced labour and physical punishment - such as whipping, shackling, branding - as well as possible sexual violence. It also meant living with the constant threat of diseases like yellow fever, smallpox, and malaria, not to mention the very real prospect of death (Morgan, 1995, p.50).

Trying to accurately piece together the hidden story of the Ker pen is difficult. In a letter of 1751 from executor James Barclay to George Drummond, Barclay describes the pen as being 'only fit for cotton or pasturage'. However, 17 years later the Accounts Produce for the years 1778-1804 record that the Redhill Pen produced not just cattle but also sugar and rum, and it is possible that the land was subsequently developed (JARD, Accounts Produce, 1B/11/4/9, 186, 193; 1B/11/4/10, 50; 1B/11/4/18, 166-167; 1B/11/4/32 113; LHB: James Barclay to George Drummond, 1/72/8/12a-c, 7 December 1751). The property was initially rented out unsuccessfully to the merchant and planter John McCleod, who failed to pay his rent in a timely fashion, causing the infirmary a great deal of trouble. McCleod eventually sold his entire estate in St Thomas-in-the-East to Barlow Trecothick (c.1718-1775) and so the remaining part of McCleod's lease on Redhill was signed over to Trecothick (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/3, 5 February 1769; 'Barlow Trecothick', 2022). Interestingly, when the Infirmary did receive a payment from McCleod for rent arrears amounting to the tune of £1,032 in December 1759, the money was used to buy shares in the British Linen Company, a company which established warehouses in Scotland, England, and the colonies. During this period linen and cotton-based textiles were reexported across the Atlantic world, and 90% of Scotland's coarse linen was exported to clothe the enslaved on plantations in the Americas – such was the cyclical nature of slavery and the wealth derived from enslaved labour.

Trecothick was partner in the London merchant firm Trecothick, Apthorp and Thomlinson, and served as Lord Mayor of London in 1770. He was a colonial agent and owner of enslaved people, possessing estates in St Andrews in Grenada and the Boston and Buckingham estate in St Thomas-in-the-East. On his death his nephew James Trecothick (1754-1843) inherited all his estates and the Redhill Pen ('James Trecothick née Ivers', 2022). After the Trecothicks purchased the lease, the property was then run on their behalf by a series of overseers and attorneys. On 1 March 1836 the infirmary received £500 'for the loss of labour of the Negroes in the West Indies' by cash from Mr James Trecothick in London (LHB: Cash Books, 1/13/4, 1 March 1836). However, it was not until 1892 that Ker's estate was finally sold for £650 (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/37, 7 March 1892).

Before closing this section, it must be stated that there is no evidence to support the idea that the Infirmary ever held people in slavery at its hospital in Edinburgh. However, it is worth mentioning that physician to the infirmary and professor of chemistry and medicine at the university, William Cullen (1710-1790), had his own connections to slavery. Cullen was one of the most notable figures of the Scottish Enlightenment and a massive draw for students from the colonies, who admired him greatly. He was no stranger to the West Indies and served as ship's surgeon aboard a South Sea Company vessel sailing from London to the West Indies (Wolf, 2015). While the ship carried only merchant cargo and there is nothing to suggest that Cullen treated enslaved people during his time in the West Indies or invested in slavery during his life, we know from Cullen's correspondence that he provided consultation for plantation holder and owner of enslaved people, Robert Brisbane (1707-1781), a Scottish-born merchant in Charleston, during Brisbane's visit to Scotland and that Brisbane later consulted Cullen by letter about an unnamed enslaved American labourer, likely owned by Brisbane, who was suffering from epilepsy ('Case of an Unnamed Slave with Epilepsy at Charleston, South Carolina', 2021). We also know from Cullen's clinical lectures at the Infirmary (1772-3), that he treated a black man called John Baptist and that on at least one occasion he treated a patient, 'a negro man...marked on the shoulder G.M.',

who had absconded from the hospital (*Caledonian Mercury*, 9 December 1746).[5]

The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and donations from the British Caribbean and America in the eighteenth century

Archibald Ker's legacy was not an indiscriminate act of philanthropy from the West Indies but rather part of a much larger appeal for funding on behalf of the hospital. In 1740 a letter was written by the managers of the infirmary to Edward Trelawny (1699-1754), Governor of Jamaica, asking him to lend his support to a collection to fund the building of the new hospital (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/1, 7 January 1740; 1/1/2, 4 January 1742). The minutes record that commissions were also sent to Col. John Campbell (1673-1740) the former captain of troops on the Darien expedition and owner of 460 enslaved people, the Hon. Henry Dawkins (1698-1744) who owned various properties in Clarendon and 1,315 enslaved people, William Cunninghame (b.1693) a merchant in Glasgow and Jamaica who owned the Grandvale Estate in Westmoreland, and Scottish brothers Robert (1698-1773) and John Hamilton (1702-c.1743) who were plantation owners.

Other members of the Scottish diaspora commissioned by the Infirmary included Lt. John Baillis a leading plantation owner, attorney, and enslaver, Joshua Crosby a landholder, John Gregory (d.1764) chief justice of Jamaica, merchant Patrick Adair, clerk of the crown William Lindsay, Patrick Ker a merchant in Kingston, and Alexander MacFarlane (1702-55), who was mentioned briefly above in relation to the Ker estate. MacFarlane was very wealthy and owned 5,605 acres on the island and was listed as the owner of 791 enslaved people at probate. When he died his property passed to his brothers, one of whom was Dr William MacFarlane, the Edinburgh physician. He left his valuable apparatus of astronomical instruments to the University of Glasgow ('Alexander Macfarlane', 2022).

---

[5] I would like to thank Professor John Cairns for sharing the above insights about Cullen's life and work at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

The Infirmary's mission to gain the financial backing of Scots in the Caribbean did not stop with Jamaica. Further letters were sent to Charles Dunbar, surveyor general of customs in Barbados, the Leeward Islands and the Bermudas, Sir William Mathew (d.1752) captain general and chief governor of the Leeward Islands, and the Hon. James Bruce (1691-1749) chief justice of Barbados (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/2, 3 May 1742). Letters were dispatched complete with gift copies of the elevation and plans of the new infirmary building. All of the men the hospital appealed to in the British Caribbean had one thing in common: they were all, in one way or another, directly connected to slavery and had benefited substantially from its practice. Either they were enslavers and plantation owners, merchants, or held high-ranking administrative positions, enforcing the Caribbean enslavement laws and ensuring the continuation of the chattel system.

The infirmary's pleas met with some success and in July 1745 the managers received bills of exchange from Mr Alexander McFarlane for the sum of £500, which works out at around £91,875 in today's money (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/2, 1 July 1745). This would have been the combined total raised in Jamaica up to that point and would have included subscriptions raised by those the infirmary commissioned. A further substantial donation was made by James Barclay who left the infirmary a £200 legacy in 1762 (LHB: Receipt Books, 1/9/1, 15 May 1777). Barclay came from a landed Scottish family in Cairness and had worked his way up from bookkeeper (who supervised gangs of the enslaved who laboured in sugar cane fields) to the post of auditor general of the revenues. At the time of his death, he owned a large estate of some 3,149 acres in Westmoreland and was co-owner of 300 acres in St Thomas-in-the-East ('James Barclay Esquire', 2022). Smaller donations were received by the likes of Dr John Cochrane of Kingston, Jamaica, the brother of Dr William Cochrane (1714-48) in Edinburgh (LHB: Receipt Books, 1/9/1, 26 June 1744). However, although we know that Cochrane ran a very successful practice in Kingston, we have no evidence to suggest he owned enslaved people or even treated them or their enslavers, though this is surely near certain. The same is true of one John Henderson

of Jamaica who bequeathed £500 to the infirmary in his will (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/4, 2 May 1768).

On 13 April 1745, Thomas Finlay, a native of Scotland with an estate at Balkirsty and clerk of the general assembly of Barbados in 1743–44, wrote to the infirmary managers informing them that £136 had been raised there for the building of the new hospital (LHB: Receipt Books, 1/9/1, 29 January 1745). Likewise, from Antigua in 1753 Henry Douglas (d.1753) an enslaver and owner of Old Road Division in St Mary Parish bequeathed a legacy of £20 sterling (d.1753) to the Infirmary (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/3, 6 August 1753; Extract from the Registry of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury concerning the legacy left by Henry Douglas, late of Antigua, to the Infirmary, 1/72/8/20a, June 1759; 'Henry Douglas', 2022). Donations totalling over £105 also came from the enslaving colonies of Montserrat and St Kitts (LHB: Receipt Books, 1/9/1, 7 Jan 1745; Managers' Minutes, 1/1/1, 6 June 1737).

The situation appears to have been less promising in America, where the infirmary hoped donations would be forthcoming. The minutes record that letters were sent to high-ranking officials such as George Clarke (1676-1760) the Governor and Commander in Chief of his Majesty's Providence in New York, Thomas Penn (1702-1755), a quaker, enslaver, and one of the proprietors of Pennsylvania, James Logan (1674-1751) a fur trader, enslaver, and former Mayor of Philadelphia, and Jonathan Belcher the Governor of New England and trader of enslaved African people. Despite the manager's entreaties personal contributions from the American colonies were few and far between. The only donation received with direct financial links to slavery came from James Crockatt (1701-1777) for £105 in 1749. Crockatt was born in Edinburgh and moved to South Carolina some time before 1728. Crockatt became South Carolina's indigo agent for the colony and the crops production in the state relied on enslaved labour. Huw (2011), states that Crockatt, not only used enslaved labourers at his warehouse and defended its practice but also owned at least two domestic enslaved people. Furthermore, according to UCL's Legacies of British Slavery Database, Crockatt also succeeded his brother as mortgagee-in-possession of Heart's Ease in

Manchester, Jamaica ('James Crokatt', 2022). In 1749 Crockatt purchased Chigwell Manor in Luxborough.[6]

The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and donations from the nineteenth century

The infirmary's financial ties to slavery did not end with the eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, it was evident that the hospital had become unfit for purpose and it was decided, after much debate - a debate which was in fact so protracted it became known as the 'battle of the sites' - that the construction of a new hospital would begin on Lauriston Place (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/23, 21 January 1867). The hospital was designed by leading Scottish architect David Bryce (1803-1876) and the foundation stone of the new Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh was laid on 13 October 1870 by the Prince of Wales. The hospital was a state-of-the-art facility built in the fashionable Scottish Baronial style and employed the pavilion system, a system championed by Florence Nightingale and believed to optimise the flow of air and light. It consisted of a medical hospital and a surgical hospital, with an administration building in the middle and had room for 500 beds (LHB: *Annual Reports*, 1/4/71, p.7-9). The first 240 patients were transported from the old infirmary to the new hospital on 31 October 1879 and in the same evening the entire staff took up residence in their new quarters on Lauriston Place (LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/30, 6 October 1879).

As was the case from the infirmary's foundation in 1729, its health and even its very existence depended on finances and funding was a fundamental and continued concern for the managers. Public subscriptions were naturally once again sought and the published subscription list of 1868 shows that £51,168 was raised (Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, 1868; LHB: Managers' Minutes, 1/1/22, 20 February 1865). This figure had risen to £88,648 by the hospital's completion, with a further £200,557 coming from the

---

[6] Thanks to the staff at the University of Edinburgh Special Collections and Lothian Health Service Archive who went out of their way to offer their guidance to me and facilitate my many requests.

general fund of the infirmary and from legacies (Dodworth, 2018). The total cost of the new hospital was estimated at £340,000 in 1789, a figure which had risen to £351,826 by the time the building fund accounts were closed in 1884 (LHB: *Report of the Proceedings at the Opening of the New Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh on Wednesday 29th October 1879; with a list of subscribers to the Building and Furnishing Funds. 1/7/19*).

The public once again answered the call and 'money flowed in for the building in a way that took the community by surprise, and tradesmen who had little money to give helped on the work by the labour of their hands' (LHB: *Opening of the New Royal Infirmary*, 1/7/19). The building fund was further bolstered by the infirmary's student fees, which by this time came to between £2,000 to £3,000 per year. University students also provided their services on the wards for free, work that would otherwise have to be paid for by the infirmary. In return the students gained world class training in clinical medicine and surgery. The progress and fortunes of the medical faculty and the infirmary had always been mutually beneficial and symbiotic. Another source of revenue came from the infirmary's investment in railway companies such as the Caledonian, London and Northwestern, and North Eastern. To what extent wealth derived from slavery and the compensation paid by the government to the owners of enslaved people at abolition helped to build these railways is a question of growing interest and the UCL Legacies of British Slavery database currently includes 175 enslavers who invested major sums in the railways (LHB: Abstract of Building Fund Account with Royal Bank, Apr-1868-Nov 1879, 17/5/1-8; 'Commercial Legacies', 2022).

Among the £51,168 of subscriptions raised for building the new hospital in 1868 were several donations from individuals who had profited financially in significant ways from slavery. Subscriptions were received from both men and women for sums of between £2 and £5,000 and came from those benefitted both directly and indirectly from slavery. They fell largely into three categories: (i) those who claimed compensation when slavery was abolished in 1834, (ii) those who inherited wealth derived from chattel slavery from their immediate or close family, and (iii) those who profited

from the trade in goods produced and related to enslaved people. These donations amounted to over £7,000, the equivalent of over £552,500 in today's money.

The largest donation came from Mrs Buchanan who lived at 49 Moray Place, a lavish Georgian townhouse in Edinburgh's New Town. Mrs Buchanan donated a staggering £5,000 in two separate subscriptions of £1,000 and £4,000 respectively. Jane Buchanan (d.1883) was the widow of James Buchanan (1785-1857), a Scottish West India Merchant. James Buchanan made his fortune in Grenada, Jamaica and Brazil, before returning to Scotland to live handsomely off the profits and invest his wealth ('James Buchanan of Moray Place', 2022). According to the Legacies of British Slavery Database he travelled to Grenada in 1800 to work with the Glasgow West India merchant firm Dennistoun, Buchanan and Company, where he profited from commerce related to chattel slavery. On his death, Buchanan bequeathed large sums to charitable and public causes, including the Royal Infirmary of Glasgow and the University of Glasgow (Mullen & Newman, 2018).

Among the individuals who were listed as claimants or beneficiaries was William Frederick Burnley (1810-1903) who donated £100 to the Infirmary ('William Frederick Burnley', 2022). William was the son of William Hardin Burnley (1780-1850), the largest owner of enslaved people in Trinidad and owner of fourteen sugar plantations ('William Hardin Burnley', 2022). Both father and son received large amounts of compensation in 1834. On his death William Hardin left a fortune of £200,000 to his son and widow. William Frederick Burnley was a partner in the Glasgow-Trinidadian based firm, Eccles, Burnley and Co. and claimed £20,000 in compensation following emancipation. He also made donations to the University of Glasgow (Mullen & Newman, 2018, p.63).

The well-known Dundee linen manufacturer David Baxter (1793-1872) donated £1,000 to the infirmary. Baxter grew rich through the export of osnaburg to the West Indies and America (Henderson, 2004; Thomson, 1874, p.339). The Carron Company who made gigantic iron sugar pans which were used to boil sugar

cane syrup and exported to the Caribbean and America, donated £100 (Ramsay, 2020).

In a subsequent subscription list of 1879, among the names of those who profited from slavery were Julia Caroline Hoyes (1818-91) and her husband John Hoyes (1806-1885) who owned the Prospect estate in St John, Jamaica and subscribed £175 apiece, Francis Brown Douglas (1814-85) who was awarded compensation as owner of Bellaire in St Vincent and subscribed £100, and the Edinburgh Tobacco Boys School, which donated £100. The school was founded and supported by the tobacco merchants of Edinburgh. This list of names is far from exhaustive – there are others and no doubt many more yet to be identified. A full official report investigating the infirmary during this period has yet to be written.

Conclusion

Edinburgh may not have been famous for its trade in tobacco, sugar, linen, or jute but its financial debt to chattel slavery is unquestionable (Devine, 1975; Mullen, 2022; Tuckett & Whatley, 2023). During its formative years the Edinburgh Medical School was a servant of empire, educating the next generation of medical professionals, helping to strengthen, enlarge, and cultivate Britain's colonial world in the West Indies, America, and elsewhere, and in doing so enabling the expansion of slavery and the trade in enslaved people.

The proceeds from slavery enriched and improved the university, medical school, and its teaching hospital. The personal wealth and philanthropy of men and women, such as Jane Buchanan, forever changed Edinburgh's urban landscape by helping to build and maintain Scotland's renowned Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and New College, shaping Edinburgh's social and cultural fabric in the process.

The Edinburgh Royal Infirmary was complicit in and benefitted substantially from the ownership of enslaved people and charitable donations derived from the profits of slavery, from the

time of its foundation well into the second half of the nineteenth century. It is estimated that the infirmary's profits from the donations, legacies, rent (up to 1834) and other monies discussed in this article, such as the compensation paid to former owners of enslaved people and the eventual sale of the Ker pen, comes to over £3.8 million. Yet this figure is surely, if not the tip of the iceberg, then certainly not the final tally. Further research is required if we are to understand the true extent of the infirmary's and medical school's financial connections to slavery, let alone their other entanglements with empire or how representative these institutions were in Edinburgh's history.

This is an important time for anyone investigating the complex relationship between medicine, slavery, colonialism, and race in Scotland. The opportunities for future research in Edinburgh alone are manifold and although too vast to discuss here at length, a few gaps in the historiography and thoughts spring to mind. Firstly, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh has to date, unlike the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, still to commission an official report outlining its entanglements with slavery, which are significant. As Watson (1969) illustrates, the RCSEd was deeply implicated in slavery through granting licences to surgeons and practitioners who worked on the ships which trafficked enslaved people. Similarly, the University of Edinburgh's own role in training the physicians and surgeons who trafficked enslaved people needs further investigation, as does its role in training those who worked on plantations in the Americas.

Secondly, the early Edinburgh Medical School educated notable figures such as William Wright (1735-1819) and James Granger (c.1721-1766) who justified and spread racialised knowledge (Chamberlain, 2023). In the later nineteenth century Robert Knox (1791-1862) also taught anatomy at the university. Knox was the author of *The Races of Men* (1850), a book which argued that race was a major determinant of culture, behaviour, and character. During this period the medical school instructed students such as Samuel Morton (1799-1851), a man considered by many to be the father of scientific racism. Morton was a founding member of the Pennsylvania Medical College in Philadelphia. Could it be possible

that the Edinburgh Medical School was in fact the birthplace of racial medicine? To what extent racial theory was taught at the University of Edinburgh is a question crying out for academic attention, as is the question of how this ideology flowed between the Edinburgh Medical School and the British Empire. To what degree racial theory was produced and circulated in Edinburgh's medical and learned societies, such as the Royal Medical Society and the Edinburgh Phrenological Society, is another interesting subject. The University Anatomical Museum, which holds one of the world's largest and most significant collections relating to phrenology, is certainly ripe with possibilities for investigation.

Thirdly, in relation to colonialism, the staggering and disproportionate presence of Edinburgh-trained medics in the East India Company and the British army and navy are topics worthy of examination. Another is the relationship between these men and Henry Dundas (1742-1811). To what extent were these medics united by the patronage of Henry Dundas, the famed great delayer of the abolition of the slave trade, President of the India Board (1793-1892), and Secretary of State for War (1794-1801) – the man responsible for making appointments to military and civilian posts in India?

Fourthly, what part did Edinburgh-trained medics play in ending the trade in enslaved people and slavery? How many, for instance, campaigned for abolition or were employed as navy medics who were responsible for policing the post-1807 blockade, after Britain outlawed the Atlantic trade in enslaved people?

Finally, given the fact that many medical students came from the American colonies/states and the West Indies during the time of enslavement, do the university's many extant medical dissertations hold valuable and unexplored knowledge about the treatment of enslaved people and the origins and dissemination of racial science? Student medical dissertations are often useful indicators of medical pedagogy.

What this article has brought to light is the darker side of the Scottish Enlightenment. This is not the world of great medical and scientific advances, sociability, and equality so often discussed

but a world of suffering and discrimination. The enslaved on Ker's pen and the enslaved 'owned' by those who made charitable donations to the infirmary were far from beneficiaries of the British colonial project. All of these enslaved people were exploited and the profits of their labour harnessed to further the improving and Enlightened goals of the hospital. It was their suffering that helped to ensure the health of the patients at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, to pay the fees of many of Edinburgh's medical students, and to make Scotland great. When I gave my work-in-progress talk on which this essay is based in the spring of 2022, I called for the University of Edinburgh to publicly acknowledge its financial debt to chattel slavery. Writing now in the autumn of 2023, to the best of my knowledge, such a public admission still remains to be made.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abstract of Building Fund Account with Royal Bank, Apr-1868-Nov 1879. Lothian Health Board, 17/5/1-8.

An Account of the Ceremony of Laying the Foundation Stone of the New College of Edinburgh, November 16 1789. Edinburgh University Archives, A-761, Da 32.1.14.

Accounts Produce, Jamaica Archives and Records Department, (1778) 1B/11/4/9 186; (1780) 1B/11/4/9 193; (1781) 1B/11/4/10 50; (1791) 1B/11/4/18 166-167; (1804) 1B/11/4/32 113.

Adam Anderson to Gavin Hamilton. Lothian Health Board, 1/72/3/12a-c, 25 November 1749.

Adam Anderson to Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. Lothian Health Board, 1/72/7/16a-b, 30 January 1752.

Adam Anderson to William Cochrane. Lothian Health Board, 1/72/2/16a-c, 13 December 1748.

Ainslie, J., 1780. *City of Edinburgh*. Available at: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/74400070> [Accessed 2 June 2021].

Akinjogbin, I.A., 1966. Archibald Dalzel: Slave Trader and Historian of Dahomey. *The Journal of African History*, 7(1): pp.67-78.

'Alexander Macfarlane'. *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146644157> [accessed 2 March 2022].

Anderson, R.G.W., 1976. *The Early Years of the Edinburgh Medical School: A Symposium Jointly Organised by the Royal Scottish Museum and the Scottish Society of the History of Medicine...* Edinburgh: Royal Scottish Museum.

Annual Reports, 1871-1872. Lothian Health Board, 1/4/71.

'Archbould or Archibald Kerr'. *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146657337> [accessed 1 September 2022].

Bank of England Inflation Calculator. Available at: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator> [accessed 1 September 2022].

Barfoot, M., *Clinical Medicine at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in the Eighteenth Century*, Wellcome Seminar, Edinburgh, 27 March 1985. Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, BAM/1.

'Barlow Trecothick'. Legacies of British Slavery Database. Available at: <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146648757> [accessed 2 September 2022].

Bell, W.J, 1950. Some American Students of 'That Shining Oracle of Physic,' Dr William Cullen of Edinburgh. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 94: pp.275-281.

Brockliss, L., 2010. Medical Education and Centres of Excellence in Eighteenth-Century Europe: Towards an Identification. In Cunningham, A. and Grell, O.P. (eds.), *Centres of Medical Excellence? Medical Travel and Education in Europe, 1500–1789*, Aldershot: Ashgate: pp.17-46.

Buck, S., 2022. *Uncovering Origins of Hospital Philanthropy: Report on Slavery and the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh*. Available at: <https://nhslothiancharity.org/atlantic-slavery-and-the-royal-infirmary-of-edinburgh/> [accessed 12 July 2023].

Burnard, T., 2001. Slave Naming Patterns: Onomastics and the Taxonomy of Race in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 31(3): pp.325-346.

Burton, R.D.E., 1999. Names and Naming in Afro-Caribbean Culture. *New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 73: pp.35–58.

Caledonian Mercury, 9 December 1746. Runaway Slaves in Britain: bondage, freedom and race in the eighteenth century, Available at: <https://www.runaways.gla.ac.uk/database/display/?rid=43> [accessed 1 November 2021].

Carrington-Farmer, C., 2019. Trading Horses in the Eighteenth Century: Rhode Island and the Atlantic World. In Guest, K. and Mattfeld, M. (eds), *Equestrian Cultures: Horses, Human Society, and the Discourse of Modernity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press: pp.92-109.

'Case of an Unnamed Slave with Epilepsy at Charleston, South Carolina', The Cullen Project. Available at: <https://www.cullenproject.ac.uk/case/370/> [accessed 5 November 2021].

Cash Books, 1831-1839. Lothian Health Board, 1/13/4.

Catford, E.F., 1984. *The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, 1929–1979*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.

Chamber R., Thomson, T. (eds), 1857. Anderson, Adam. *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*. Glasgow, Edinburgh; London: Blackie and Son, vol.1: pp.52-3.

Chamberlain, D., 2023. *Edinburgh-trained Doctors on Caribbean Plantations*. UncoverEd. Available at: <https://edglobal.egnyte.com/dl/vXigsqytzF>. [accessed 26 February 2023].

'Commercial Legacies'. *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/commercial/> [accessed 1 September 2022].

Comrie, J.D., Miles, A., Ritchie, R, 1921. *Origin and Development of the Edinburgh Medical School*. Edinburgh: Chambers.

Denzel, M.A., 2010. *Handbook of World Exchange Rates, 1590–1914*. Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Devine, T.M., 2011. Did Slavery make Scotia Great? *Britain and the World*, 4(1): pp.40-64.

Devine, T.M., 1975. *The Tobacco Lords: a study of the tobacco merchants of Glasgow and their trading activities, c. 1740-90.* Edinburgh: John Donald.

Dingwall, H., 2010. The Importance of Being Edinburgh: The Rise and Fall of the Edinburgh Medical School in the Eighteenth Century. In Cunningham, A. and Grell, O.P. (eds.), *Centres of Medical Excellence? Medical Travel and Education in Europe, 1500–1789*, Aldershot: Ashgate: pp.305-324.

Dodworth. K., 2018. *Engaging with the Past in the Edinburgh Futures Institute: Results of the Scoping Study*, May-July 2018.

Emerson, R., 2004. The Founding of the Edinburgh Medical School. *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 59(2): pp.183-218.

Equiano, O., 2009. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano: Written by Himself*. Auckland: The Floating Press.

Extract from the Registry of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury concerning the legacy left by Henry Douglas, late of Antigua, to the Infirmary. Lothian Health Board, 1/72/8/20a, June 1759.

Ferguson, S., 1974. West Indian Medical Graduates of Edinburgh to 1800. *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 29(1): pp.111–114.

Fraser, A.G., 1989. *The Building of Old College: Adam Playfair and the University of Edinburgh*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

A General Treatise of Naval Trade and Commerce, as Founded on the Laws and Statutes of this Realm...,1739. London: s.n.

Graham, E.J., 2005. *Seawolves*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.

Greene, J.P., 2016. *Settler Jamaica in the 1750s: A Social Portrait*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

Hamilton, D., 2005. *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World, 1750-1820*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Healey, E., 2004. Middleton, George. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available at: < https://doi-

org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/49134> [accessed 8 November 2021].

Henderson, T.F., 2004. Baxter, Sir David, baronet. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available at: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/1730> [accessed 4 September 2022].

'Henry Douglas', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146653101> [accessed 2nd September 2022].

Huw, D.T., 2011. *The Atlantic at Work: Britain and South Carolina's Trading Networks, c.1730 to 1790*. (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford).

'James Barclay'. *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146650399> [accessed 1 August 2022].

James Barclay to George Drummond, Lothian Health Board, 1/72/8/12a-c, 7 December 1751.

James Barclay to Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. Lothian Health Board, 1/72/5/5a-b., 22 October 1750.

James Barclay to Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. Lothian Health Board, 1/72/8/12a-c, 7 December 1751.

'James Buchanan of Moray Place', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: < http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146652835> [accessed 1 September 2022].

'James Crokatt', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: < https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146665715> [accessed 12 May 2022].

'James Trecothick née Ivers', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/12145> [accessed 2 September 2022].

Journal of the House of Lords, 1805. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, vol.45.

Kauffman, M.H., 2003. *Medical Teaching in Edinburgh in the 18th and 19th Centuries*. Edinburgh: Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

Lea, R.S., 1970. Drummond, John, (1676-1742), of Quarrell, Stirling. Houses of Parliament. Available at: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/drummond-john-1676-1742> [accessed 10 January 2021].

Lewis, S., 1888. List of the American Graduates in Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, From 1705 to 1866, with their Theses. *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 42: pp.159-165.

List of the Graduates in Medicine in the University of Edinburgh from MDCCV to MDCCCLXVI, 1867. Edinburgh: Printed by Neill & Company.

List of the Subscribers to the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies...,1697. Edinburgh: s.n.

Managers' Minutes, 1728-1893. Lothian Health Board, 1/1/1 - 1/1/37.

Mays, A. and Shea, G.S., 2011. East India Company and Bank of England Shareholders during the South Sea Bubble: Partitions, Components and Connectivity in a Dynamic Trading Network. *Centre for Dynamic Macroeconomic Analysis Working Paper Series*: pp.1-73.

McGilvary, G.K., 2016. John Drummond of Quarrel: East India Patronage and Jacobite Assimilation, 1720-80. In Hamilton, J.D. and Maccines A.I. (eds), *Jacobitism, Enlightenment and Empire, 1680–1820*. Abingdon: Routledge: pp.124-141.

Morgan, P.D., 1995. Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen, 1750-175. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52(1): pp.47-76.

Mosma, c.1730, Archibald Kerr, oil on canvas, NHS Lothian Charity – Tonic Collection. Available at:

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/archibald-kerr-184584> [accessed 23 July 2023].

Mullen, S., Newman, S., 2018. Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow. Available at: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_607547_smxx.pdf> [accessed 7 August 2022].

Mullen, S., 2022. *The Glasgow Sugar Aristocracy: Scotland and Caribbean Slavery, 1775-1838*. London: University of London Press.

Neil, L., 1994. For God's Sake, Remitt Me: The Adventures of George Middleton, John Law's London Goldsmith-Banker, 1712-1729. *Business and Economic History*, 23(2): pp.27-60.

Phillipson, N., 2003. The Making of an Enlightened University. In Anderson, R., Lynch, M. and Phillipson, N.T. (eds.), *The University of Edinburgh: An Illustrated History*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: pp.51-101.

Ramsay, L., 2020. *Carron Co. Sugar Pans–the Slavery Connection*. Available at: <http://www.ourstoriesfalkirk.com/story/carron-co-sugar-pans--the-slavery-connection> [accessed 10 September 2022].

Receipt Books, 1744-1768. Lothian Health Board, 1/9/1.

'Red Hill [Jamaica | St Thomas-in-the-East, Surrey]', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/1512> [accessed 1 September 2022].

Report of the Proceedings at the Opening of the New Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh on Wednesday 29th October 1879; with a list of subscribers to the Building and Furnishing Funds. LHB1/7/19.

Risse, G.B., 1986. *Hospital Life in Enlightenment Scotland: Care and Teaching at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, F.J.G. & Wallis P.J., 1975. *Book Subscription Lists: a Revised Guide*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Harold Hill & Son Ltd.

Romanes, G., 1979. *The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh 1729-1879-1979 and the Simpson Memorial Maternity Pavilion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

Rosner, I., 1991. *Medical Education in the Age of Improvement: Edinburgh Students and Apprentices, 1760-1826*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 2021. *Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and Slavery Connections*. Available at: <https://www.rcpe.ac.uk/sites/default/files/slavery_connections_dec_2021.pdf> [Accessed 2 September 2022].

Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, 1730. *An Account of the Rise and Establishment of the Infirmary, or Hospital for Sick-Poor, erected at Edinburgh*. Edinburgh: Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, 1868. *Rebuilding of the Medical Hospital of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh*. Edinburgh: Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

The Saint Lauretia Project, The Middle Passage. Available at: <https://runaways.gla.ac.uk/minecraft/index.php/the-middle-passage/> [accessed 16 February 2022].

Schwartz, J., 2021. Scientific Ferment in Late Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh. In Brown R. and Park, M. (eds.), *Travels and Explorations in Natural History for the Royal Society*. Cham: Springer: pp.1-4.

Scottish Court of Session. 1763, Blackwood v Cathcart. Available at: <https://www.casemine.com/judgement/uk/5a8ff80360d03e7f57eb7421> [accessed 14 October 2021].

Sedgwick, R.R. (a), 1970. Blackwood, John (c.1698-1777), of Charlton, Kent. *The History of Parliament*. Available at: <http://www.histparl.ac.uk/volume/1715-1754/member/blackwood-john-1698-1777> [accessed 4 February 2022].

Sedgwick, R.R. (b), 1970. Buchanan, Neil (c.1696-1744), of Hillington, Renfrew, and Botolph Lane, Eastcheap, London. *The*

History of Parliament. Available at: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/buchanan-neil-1696-1744> [accessed 2 May 2022].

Shepherd, V., 2009. *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery: Contested Terrain in Colonial Jamaica*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publisher.

Sheridan, R.B., 1981. The Guinea Surgeons on the Middle Passage: The Provision of Medical Services in the British Slave Trade. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 14(4): pp.601-625.

Sheridan, R.B., 1985. *Doctors and Slaves: A Medical and Demographic History of Slavery in the British West Indies, 1680-1834*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Slave Returns. Jamaican Archives and Records Department, (1817) T71/145 844-846; (1820) T71/146 476; (1823) T71/147 363; (1826) T71/148 355-356; (1832) T71/150 515.

Southey, T. 1827. *Chronological History of the West Indies…* s.l., s.n., vol.7.

Subscription papers of November 2 1789. A list of those who have already subscribed, March 5 1790. Edinburgh University Archives, A-761, Da 32.1.8.

Thomson, J., 1874. *The History of Dundee…* Dundee: Durham.

Tuckett, S. & Whatley, C.A., 2023. Textiles in Transition: Linen, Jute and the Dundee Region's Transnational Networks, c.1740–1880. In Bond, E. and Morris, M. (eds.), *Scotland's Transnational Heritage: Legacies of Slavery and Empire*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: pp.23-37.

Turner, A.L., 1937. *Story of a Great Hospital: The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh 1729-1929*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd.

UncoverED, 2023. Decolonising University Histories: Reflections on Research into African, Asian and Caribbean Students at Edinburgh. In Bond, E. and Morris, M. (eds.), *Scotland's Transnational Heritage: Legacies of Slavery and Empire*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: pp.185-199.

University Committee Minute Book 1789-1801. Edinburgh City Archives, Loose volumes on shelf: 9/41 L234.

Wallis, P.J. & Wallis, R.V., 1988. *Eighteenth Century Medics: subscriptions, licences, apprenticeships*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Project for Historical Biobibliography.

Watson, W.N., 1969. The Guinea Trade and some of its Surgeons (with special reference to the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh), *Journal of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh*, 14(4): pp.203-14.

Will of John Drummond. The National Archives, PROB 11/722/407.

Will and Testament of Archibald Ker, Late of the Parish of St Thomas in the East, Jamaica. Lothian Health Board, 1/72/5/7a-b, 1749.

'William Frederick Burnley', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/45585> [accessed 12 April 2022].

'William Hardin Burnley', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*. Available at: <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/28815> [accessed 1 March 2022].

Wilson, J.G., 1929. The Influence of Edinburgh on American Medicine in the 18th Century. *Proceedings of the Institute of Medicine of Chicago*, 75, pp.129-138.

Winterbottom, P., 2004. Drummond, Andrew (1688-1769). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available at < https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/47581> [accessed 5 April 2022].

Wolf, J.C., 2015. *Our Master and Father at the Head of Physick: The Learned Medicine of William Cullen*. (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh).

BIOGRAPHY

Rachael Scally is a historian of eighteenth and nineteenth-century medicine, science, and empire. She was the 2021 Daiches-Manning Memorial Fellow in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies. Her project 'The Early Years of the Edinburgh Medical School and Royal Infirmary: Slavery, Medicine, and Philanthropy in Scotland' examined the links between these institutions and slavery in the long eighteenth century. After completing her IASH fellowship she worked on a related project, sponsored by the Edinburgh Futures Institute, which examined the financial ties between the rebuilding of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and enslavement, c.1860-1879. Before coming to Edinburgh, she completed an AHRC funded DPhil in History at Christ Church College and graduated with an MPhil in Early Modern History and a BA in Philosophy from Trinity College Dublin. Her doctoral thesis examined the practice of Enlightenment in Ireland and focused on the unique and fundamental contribution made by medical practitioners to the life of Dublin's learned societies, c.1683–1801. She is a research affiliate in the faculty of history at the University of Oxford and her current project, which is sponsored by a British Academy and Leverhulme research grant, examines Edinburgh-trained medical practitioners and slavery in the British Caribbean, c.1726-1834.

THEODORE LOUIS TROST

The Gospel of the Unnamed and the Subversion of Greatness

I. Introduction: Jesus Among the Enslaved

At the start of the New Year 2023, an article appeared in the online journal *The Daily Beast* that caused some alarm in certain spirals of the World Wide Web. 'Was the Virgin Mary Actually a Slave?' asked Candida Moss, the Edward Cadbury Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham, UK (Moss, 2023). Professor Moss was incited to initiate this inquiry in view of a book chapter written by Mitzi J. Smith, the J. Davison Philips Professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, in Atlanta, Georgia. Under the title 'Abolitionist Messiah: A Man Named Jesus Born of a *Doulē*' (Smith, 2022), Professor Smith argues that Mary, as depicted in the opening chapter of Luke's gospel, is both the mother of God and an enslaved woman (a *doulē* in the Greek). Smith speculates that Mary was the property of Joseph, the father—'as was thought'—of Jesus (Lk 3.23b). Furthermore, as the Galilean offspring of an enslaved person, Jesus necessarily would have been born into slavery himself and would remain enslaved until the age of thirty when, under the system of bondage instituted by the Romans, he might qualify for manumission (Smith, 2022, p.55).

Dr Smith goes on to suggest that English translators of Luke's text have been consistently unwilling to render Luke's words precisely. Instead, in one translation after another the word 'slave' is turned into 'servant' (*diakonos*) in order to avoid placing Jesus alongside his mother at the very bottom of the social pyramid amidst the expendables (Lenski, 1984, p.284) and the unnamed, or those whom Frantz Fanon would call the 'wretched of the earth' (2021). Against the effort to efface the received text, Smith embraces the task of 'decolonizing Jesus', as she characterized her project in a presentation to the IASH Fellows in March 2022 (M2M, 2022). As a method, decoloniality

> aspires to restore, elevate, renew, rediscover, and acknowledge and validate the multiplicity of lives, life-experiences, culture and knowledge of indigenous people, people of color, and colonized people as well as to decenter hetero/cis-normativity, gender hierarchies, and racial privilege. (William and Mary, para.2).

While it is not possible to prove conclusively whether the 1st century CE Galilean Jesus had actually been enslaved, Smith places emphasis on the social location of Jesus as depicted in the New Testament. In the tradition of liberation theology,[1] she makes the crucial observation that Jesus lives 'in somatic and existential solidarity with other enslaved people' (p.56)—as his death by crucifixion demonstrates graphically.

A crucified Christ, however, is not a useful 'Lord' in the service of Empire; nor, for that matter, is he an effective standard bearer in the quest for world domination. This is not the kind of 'greatness' that the operative system promotes or rewards. Smith's critique of the translation process suggests one way that orthodoxy, or established ways of knowing, may have worked to exclude what Portuguese sociologist Bonaventura de Sousa Santos calls 'modes of being otherwise' (2018, p.3). And yet, as Smith's 'Abolitionist

---

[1] Liberation theology is a religious movement that arose in Latin America and in Africa during the latter third of the 20th century. It emphasizes Christian action or praxis as a means to upend unjust social structures and develops in part as a critique of colonialism. Smith cites Black liberation theologian James Cone and Womanist theologian Jacqueline Grant, among many others, in her work (Smith, 2022, p.68).

Messiah' also suggests, the biblical account does manage to retain alternatives to the status quo—for the first century and perhaps also for the 21st century.

In the meditation that follows, I begin with a consideration of the concept of greatness as promoted by Donald Trump and enshrined in the watchword 'America First'. The former president advocates a notion of national greatness that has fallen into favour with a significant portion of the American population including millions of his Christian supporters. Indicative of the merger between political power and the muscular Christianity he champions was Trump's walk across Lafayette Square during the Black Lives Matter protests against the public execution of George Floyd in June 2020. In his gesture of opposition to BLM, Trump halted before the door of Saint John's Episcopal Church and held aloft the unopened Bible his daughter had carried for him in her handbag. The president had no formal remarks to deliver; instead, he stood reverentially with the church behind him while cameras clicked before him. When asked at last if he had any thoughts, Trump said: 'We have a great country. That's my thoughts. Greatest country in the world. We will make it greater. We will make it even greater. It won't take long. It's not going to take long. You see what's going on. You see it coming back' (Bennett, 2022).

Surprisingly, perhaps, the greatness that the former President values is not too far removed from the kind of prominence to which Jesus' named disciples aspire in the Gospel of Mark. Indeed, the tension between the notoriety the disciples seek and the status Jesus has to offer is a central concern of that particular gospel. And so I venture in the ensuing sections of this essay to open the book Trump kept closed in order to contend that Mark's gospel offers what might be called anachronistically a decolonial depiction of the Jesus movement. In Mark's gospel, Jesus' named disciples are like the seed that falls on rocky soil: although they receive 'the word' with joy, at first, 'they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on

account of the word, immediately they fall away' (Mk 4.16-17).[2] But this does not mean that Jesus is wholly abandoned, for Mark's gospel offers a series of exemplars who meet more closely the criteria for greatness that the Gospel's Jesus espouses. These are the ones who 'hear the word and accept it'; and although they germinate in subterranean obscurity, they can be relied upon in Mark's narrative world (at least) to eventually 'bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold' (4.20). Taking a cue from what Bonaventura de Sousa Santos calls 'the sociology of absences', I advance an exegesis of certain seemingly unremarkable episodes in the Gospel in an attempt turn 'absent subjects into present subjects' (Sousa Santos, 2018, pp.4-5) and exemplars of the inverted kind of greatness that Jesus espouses in Mark. These exemplars include the unnamed Gentile woman in chapter seven; the unnamed poor widow in chapter twelve; and the unnamed woman who anoints Jesus with oil in chapter fourteen. I conclude that a focus on these women (as Mark's gospel recommends), presents a bold challenge to the notion of greatness as it has been nurtured in certain precincts of allegedly 'Christian' America.

II. 'America First' and the Contours of Greatness

Flagrantly, and as if choreographed by the producers of a reality TV programme, Donald Trump floated down the golden escalator into the lobby of Trump Tower on 16 June 2015 to announce his intention to run for the office of President of the United States. His wife Melania guided him in the procession, all dressed in white like one of the angels from Jacob's dream (Gen 28.12). Trump himself would later liken this triumphal entry to a scene from the Academy Awards, perhaps in recognition of the many actors whose presence in the lobby had been acquired through monetary inducements (Kruse, 2019). After his descent, Trump diagnosed a variety of ills that plagued America and then proclaimed the nation's pressing need for a truly great leader. He

---

[2] To anticipate, this is precisely what happens ten chapters later. In Mark 14.50, and just like the seeds that fall on rocky soil, Jesus' named male disciples abandon him. Mark's persistent use of the verb *skandalizō*—'to fall away' or 'to abandon'—in 4.16 and again in 14.27-28 is telling in this regard.

went on to specify: 'We need a leader that wrote *The Art of the Deal*'—a reference to the best-selling book he co-wrote with Tony Schwartz in 1987 and, after the Bible, his 'favourite book of all time' (Merritt, 2016). Trump then pledged that as President he would rescue the nation, 'bring it back bigger and better and stronger than ever before, and... make America great again' (Washington Post Staff, 2015). 'Make America Great Again' operated as both campaign slogan and a registered trademark for the 'Donald J. Trump for President organization'—for use on items such as 'backpacks' and 'change purses' and also goods made of leather and imitations of leather, including 'umbrellas, parasols and walking sticks; whips, harness and saddlery' (Justia Trademarks, 2015; Kerrick, 2022). The ubiquity of the slogan that Trump's trademark application anticipated paralleled the effort to place the Trump name on everything with which Trump associated himself: from meat products marketed as 'Trump Steaks', to a series of online and weekend seminars marketed as 'Trump University', to the tall buildings in major cities that bear the Trump name, including the Trump Tower in New York.

Candidate Trump capitalized on his branding effort with the publication of a book that rose as high as number five on the New York Times bestseller list. Initially called *Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again* when it appeared in November 2015, the book was rebranded for paperback purchase eight months later under the title *Great Again: How to Fix Our Crippled America*. While the book offers a cursory outline of Trump's political views, no clear political philosophy or declaration of principles emerges from the text. What the text does offer is a portrait of greatness American-style, a portrait resembling in manner and appearance Donald Trump himself. The tone and tenor of the book is sounded already in the preface, which explains Trump's move into politics as a consequence of his many business successes. He writes:

> When I started speaking out, I had no idea what the reaction would be. I know I'm a great builder.... I've had tremendous success. But I hadn't fully exposed my political thoughts and ideas to restore America's

greatness. I also knew that the Trump brand is one of the world's great icons of quality and excellence. Everybody talks about it. Everybody knows about it. (Trump, 2015, p.xi).

To underscore the iconic nature of the Trump brand, *Great Again* includes sixteen pages of photographs, most of them in full colour. A few pages feature Trump himself: Donald Trump with his parents, Donald Trump with his family, Donald Trump with his older children at the office, Donald Trump with his confirmation class at First Presbyterian Church, Jamaica, NY, and so forth.[3] Most of the portfolio is devoted to Trump's many properties, featuring in particular a series of very tall buildings with the name Trump displayed prominently upon them. The caption accompanying the photo for the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas, for example, reads 'Las Vegas's tallest building'. Additional photos emphasize the height and the enormity of Trump's numerous other properties (following p.114).

While the average length of each chapter in the book is roughly ten pages, Trump devotes another sixteen pages to the book's final chapter entitled 'About the Author'. Here the author is described as 'the archetypal businessman [and] a deal-maker without peer' (p.177). Then follows what reads much like an extended press release for Trump's vast empire of successes: office buildings, hotels, golf courses and clubs, beauty pageants, best-selling books, his television programme *The Apprentice*, even the listing of 'You're Fired'—the words he used to dismiss contestants on his reality television show—as the third greatest TV catchphrase of all time (pp.178-193). Not mentioned are any bouts with bankruptcy, legal entanglements, or labour disputes. None of these, it would seem, have tarnished Trump's sense of self-worth. Nor have they affected his financial stature; for with regard to his personal finances, he claims: 'I have very little debt, and even that is at low interest rates. My current net worth is more than ten billion dollars' (p.173).

---

[3] The black and white photograph of Trump's confirmation class is the only one in the book's collection to contain any people of colour in it. The photo's caption directs the viewer to Trump's position in the upper right corner. His classmates are not mentioned.

It is quite clear in *Great Again* what constitutes greatness from the American point of view that Trump advances and that informed his successful bid to become the President of the United States. Greatness is the achievement of great men first of all, and Trump does not hesitate to suggest that he is a great man. Greatness also involves name recognition: it is a matter of putting one's brand on everything one produces, sells, or owns. Greatness is also a matter of putting oneself first, so as to dominate others and to eliminate the weak—as the catchphrase 'You're Fired!' performs so succinctly. Greatness is the doctrine that animates the call to 'Make America Great Again' and it provides the rationale for the 'America First' policy that Trump enunciated upon his inauguration.

Millions of Americans voted for this vision of greatness in 2016. As did millions more in 2020.

And why not? Even Jesus' closest associates, according to the Gospel of Mark, revere greatness in a manner like unto Trump. What God-loving Christian would not desire to be in their company?

III. The Pursuit of Greatness among the Disciples in Mark

Near the midpoint of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus' disciples enter into a lively debate as they traverse the Galilean hills on the way to the seaside city of Capernaum—where, at the beginning of Mark's gospel, the unnamed mother-in-law of the disciple Peter (then called Simon) significantly ministered to Jesus and his followers. When asked by Jesus what their disputation on the way to Capernaum had entailed, all of the disciples fall silent, for, as Mark records: 'they had argued with one another about who was the greatest' (Mk 9.34). Jesus responds to this disclosure with the paradoxical saying: 'whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all' (9.35). In this instance, the word *diakonos*, literally 'servant', is used.[4] The radical inversion of the existing

---

[4] The verb used to describe the actions of Peter's unnamed mother-in-law at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark is *diakoneō*: 'to serve' or 'to minister'. The noun form is *diakonos*, which

social order that Jesus prescribes perplexes the disciples. As if to illustrate or to interrogate this curious aphorism, John recalls a recent encounter with an individual who was casting out demons in Jesus' name. The disciples tried to stop this exorcist because, as John reports, 'he was not following us' (9.38).

The Gospel of Mark depicts the disciples as effective preachers, exorcists, and healers who anoint the sick with oil after they are first sent out by Jesus into the villages of Galilee (6.7-13). But they are baffled subsequently by some of Jesus' words and deeds; and in the episode that precedes their debate about greatness, all of the disciples fail to cast out the demon that has tormented a convulsing boy since birth (9.14-29). So it is ironic that the disciples attempt to silence this anonymous individual who successfully performs the very service they had just failed to perform. Jesus tells the disciples to allow the exorcist to continue his healing work, for he does so not to advance his own name, but by inference as one who 'bears the name of Christ' (9.41). To understand how greatness operates in Mark, one must allow for a little epistemic disobedience and look to the unlikely, rather than the allegedly authorized, for guidance. Greatness, in the social construction of reality that Mark's gospel advances, is not a matter of making a name for oneself. Still, as the disciples proceed to demonstrate, the pursuit for greatness conceived in terms of notoriety or supremacy, is not easily surrendered.

One chapter after Jesus' discourse on servantry is delivered, James and John revisit their anxiousness for greatness and ask to be placed in positions of honour; they ask to sit by Jesus, one 'at the left hand' and one 'at the right hand', in order to bask, as it were, in his glory. The other disciples, upon hearing about the Zebedee brothers' grab for glory, become indignant. Apparently they, too, had not entirely embraced Jesus' message about being last and prefer pre-eminence to Jesus' prescribed subordination. In response to this latest disturbance, Jesus puts forth a critique concerning the social construction of the first century CE Roman Empire. Remarkably, this critique resonates with socio-political

---

Jesus uses in chapter 9 to recommend the role of 'servant', or 'deacon', as model for discipleship.

arrangements that have managed to prevail—often in the name of Christ—for two thousand years (as observed in the previous section of this essay). Jesus says: 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them'. In contrast to this arrangement, Jesus offers a radically different vision of community. He continues: 'But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant (*diakonos*), and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave (*doulos*) of all' (10.35-44).

In part Jesus reiterates here the language he used earlier in response to the disciples' wayward dispute over greatness. But since the notion of 'servant' did not register sufficiently to preclude a request like the one advanced subsequently by James and John, Jesus in this instance introduces the word 'slave' into the equation. And so, Mark's Jesus locates his activities and those of his followers in solidarity with society's most vulnerable and abused. The one who serves the community, the one who—in practically a literal sense—belongs to the community, is designated 'great'. Whether or not the named disciples are part of this arrangement by the end of Mark's gospel is an open question. For when Jesus is arrested as a criminal in the Garden of Gethsemane, his named disciples abandon him. When he undergoes a public execution by crucifixion and in the company of criminals—one 'at the left hand' and one 'at the right hand'—those same disciples are nowhere to be found.[5]

Who then, gets this message of radical reversal? Who, among the characters in Mark, is capable of learning the lesson of positionality such that they would willingly be last?

---

[5] The places of honour to the left and right of Jesus that James and John request in Mk 10.40 (*ek dexiōn mou ē ex euōnymōn*) are the positions assumed by the robbers who are crucified alongside him in Mk 15.27 (*ek dexiōn kai hena ex euōnymōn*). My focus here is on the contrast between Jesus' named and unnamed followers. Three women who had served Jesus in Galilee (*diakoneó*; see also Mk 1.13) are present at the crucifixion, but 'at a distance' (15.40). These women are named and they appear again at the tomb on a misbegotten mission to anoint Jesus' body for burial. The convoluted propinquity of 'Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph' is related to the concern for proximity to Jesus and his glory. This is a matter for another study, though I would suggest here that the naming of this Mary should be read in relation to Jesus' early statement, 'Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother' (3.35).

This is a lesson that even Jesus had not yet mastered when he first appeared in Galilee proclaiming the good news concerning the proximity of the kingdom of God![6] To acquire the appropriate sensibility, it is necessary for Jesus to venture beyond familiar borders to the region of Tyre in order to receive instruction from a desperate, despised, and unnamed mother.

IV. The Syrophoenician Woman and the Possibility of Inclusion

Earlier in Mark's gospel, upon returning in pairs from their separate missionary outings through the villages of Galilee, the disciples were anxious to tell Jesus all that they had done and taught (Mk 6.30). But this dialogical effort is hindered, perhaps by the disciples' need for rest and also because Jesus and the disciples are pressed upon by the comings and goings of so many people that they 'have no leisure even to eat' (6.31). Jesus recommends a retreat to a deserted place but crowds follow the entourage everywhere they go. This leads to an episode during which 5,000 people are fed from five loaves of bread and two fish. In the aftermath of that dispensation, the disciples and Jesus plan to retreat to the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, to the village of Bethsaida. But an ill wind blows the disciples' boat to the western shore instead, to the town of Gennesaret. Jesus is immediately recognized there and is surrounded by crowds that persist in following him wherever he goes. In the ongoing effort to locate a place of rest, Jesus at last ventures to the region of Tyre, a city on the Mediterranean coast and one located at some distance from his Jewish homeland. He brings with him to Tyre his desire to escape notice, but to no avail. A woman bows down at his feet and an extraordinary exchange occurs.

The woman who approaches Jesus is described as being a Syrophoenician—an inhabitant of this vast region to the north and

---

[6] The term 'kingdom of God' rings both patriarchal and hierarchical. In the context of this brief essay, unfortunately, there is insufficient space to explore the contours of this concept. The relationships that develop among the characters under consideration here might be taken as signs of this alternative kingdom. Provisionally, it may be useful to think of 'kingdom of God' as a 'regime of truth' in which power operates in quite a different manner than the way it does in the operative system. In addition to Waetjen, 2014, see also Lorenzin, 2015.

west of Judea and Galilee—and a Gentile or Greek. She is not Jewish, in other words, and the nature of Jesus' encounter with her centres upon this auspicious engagement with 'otherness'. Like so many others who had approached Jesus already during his processions through the countryside, this woman begs Jesus for help. She asks him to cast a demon from her daughter, which would seem a legitimate request as Jesus had successfully performed a number of exorcisms by this point in Mark's gospel. In addition, he had shown favour to daughters before by bringing back to life the daughter of the synagogue leader Jairus (5.22), and by addressing as 'daughter' the woman who had initiated her own healing by touching his cloak (5.34). But in this instance, Jesus refuses rescue. In an act of epistemic violence, Jesus utters these harsh words: 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's bread (*artos*) and throw it to the dogs' (7.27).

When Mark's Jesus gives priority to 'the children', he is likely referring to Jewish people. His activities earlier in this gospel were performed on Jewish soil or in the company of Jews in the ethnically mixed community of the Gerasenes. He brings with him into foreign territory, then, an ethnically prescribed preferential option for the children of Israel, in tune, perhaps, with nationalistic longings for a Messiah or Christ who will return Israel to its prior state of glory as in the time when David was king. These harsh words (at least to some ears) are not extraordinary. To contemporary ears, they might be paraphrased on this wise: 'America First means America will put its citizens, its values, and its concerns, first, like all nations should' (Trump, 2017).[7] Jesus has not yet happened upon the precept he recommends later to his disciples: 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all' (9.35). He even equates the Syrophoenician woman and her kind with the demeaning epithet 'the dogs'.

---

[7] My concern here is with the construction of an ethnic and national identity anchored in a myth of by-gone greatness that determines who is an insider or inheritor of a particular common identity and who is excluded from that community. Jesus makes the distinction between 'the children' and 'the dogs'; his is a program of 'children [of Israel] first' to the exclusion of the dogs. This principle is critiqued by the Syrophoenician woman, who insists that the dogs, too, are included in the household (*oikos*), the context in which the story unfolds (Mk 7.24).

But Jesus is about to undergo a conversion. The unnamed woman confronts him with the 'possibility of an otherwise' (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p.17). She counters: 'Lord (*Kyrios*), even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs' (7.28). Just as the disciples had collected the leftover scraps of bread after the feeding of the 5,000 (6.43), this unnamed woman asserts the value to the household economy of the otherwise neglected crumbs.[8] She converts Jesus to the notion that 'the last shall be first', the foundational principle of decolonization according to Frantz Fanon (2021, p.2) and a principle that Jesus will espouse only after this remarkable encounter (9.35; 10.31). In his response to the woman's retort, Jesus declares: 'For that saying (*logos*), you may go—the demon has left your daughter' (7.29). The 'saying' here is ambiguous. *Logos* means 'word' and Jesus could be referring to the word with which the woman addressed him, namely 'Lord'. From this point of view, the woman has demanded that Jesus exercise his responsibilities as 'Lord' beyond the preconceived boundaries of his ethnic imaginary. But *logos* can also mean a 'saying', in this case a saying that asserts the worth of the disparaged human being and contains a crucial insight into the importance of the children's bread as both sustenance and symbol.

And so another possibility presents itself. Perhaps this woman represents those persons who, 'like a seed grown on good soil, hear the word (*akousin ton logon*) and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold' (4.20). Did this woman's 'word' about the bread, about the unbound expanse of the kingdom of God that is at hand and her concurrent belief in the good news (1.15), bring about the healing of her daughter? The disciples are confused, subsequently, because they do not understand about the bread (8.17); but the Syrophoenician woman does![9]

---

[8] The symbolic and sacramental significance of bread in this section of Mark's gospel is also related to the 'Last Supper', on which occasion Jesus says of broken bits of bread: 'Take; this is my body' (Mk 14.23).

[9] Bread operates both literally and metaphorically in this story. Who gets to eat bread with whom is a debate that Jesus engages just prior to his sojourn to Tyre (Mk 7.17-23). Then in this exchange, bread is both 'something to eat' and also healing. After Jesus healed the synagogue leader's daughter, he told the disciples to 'give her something to eat' (5.43).

This is not simply a matter of understanding, however; it is also a matter of praxis. As a consequence of his encounter with the Syrophoenician woman, a radical subversion of the status quo takes place and what counts for 'normalcy' is undone.[10] Whereas Jesus seems to have considered the region of Tyre to exist beyond the borders of the kingdom of God, at least provisionally, he now repents—he literally turns around (*metanoeó*) and proceeds north (in the opposite direction from the Sea of Galilee) to Sidon; then, he travels eastward, deeper into alien territory bringing bread to the Gentiles and enacting inclusion.[11] This is not necessarily obvious from Mark's curt description of Jesus' revised itinerary, which is both hidden in plain sight and is also revealing. Mark merely notes: 'Then [Jesus] returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon, towards the Sea of Galilee, in [the midst of] the Decapolis' (7.31). Still, this is a fantastically circuitous route back to the Sea of Galilee. And it is only after he completes this route (or path),[12] after he brings hearing, speech, and sight to the afflicted and after sharing bread with 4,000 in Gentile territory, that Jesus arrives at last at Bethsaida. Bethsaida, after all, was Jesus' designated destination following the feeding of the 5,000—before a contrary wind blew the disciples' boat off (or perhaps onto) course (6.45).

He needed to meet the Syrophoenician woman before he could get there.

Before the feeding of the five thousand, he told the disciples, 'You give them something to eat' (6.37). Metaphorically speaking, is it possible that the Syrophoenician woman has assumed the power or the responsibility to heal her daughter herself; to, in other words, give her something to eat? Jesus says: 'Because of this word [*dia touton ton logon*] go; the demon has left your daughter' (7.29). Is this word (*logos*) the word that has fallen on the good soil to bring forth fruit (4.20)? See also Alonso, 2011, pp.213-220.

[10] In his speech at the conclusion of the Selma to Montgomery march, Martin Luther King Jr confronts the problem of what counts as normative with these words: 'The only normalcy that we will settle for is the normalcy that recognizes the dignity and worth of all of God's children' (King, 1965).

[11] Jesus' operative priority, to feed 'the children' first (Mk 7.27), is abandoned in Tyre as he turns his attention away from the Jewish territory, for a time, in order to *first* bring bread and healing to Gentiles (7.31-8.9).

[12] The making of decolonial paths as described by Walsh might fruitfully be considered with reference to the construction of the 'way' (*hodos*), or path, in Mark's gospel (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, pp.18-19).

V. The Widow's Coins and the Temple's Undoing

When Jesus came upon the temple in Jerusalem during the last week of his life, it had been under construction for over 45 years as a consequence of the ongoing and luxurious modifications initiated by 'King Herod'. Herod, who died around the time Jesus was born, had ruled the region at the behest of the Roman Empire after the demise of the Hasmonean client state in 37 BCE. His many and magnificent building projects, starting with the temple and including the massive fortress at Masada and the port city of Caesarea, earned for him the honorific title 'Herod the Great' (in any case, posthumously). Writing near the end of the first century CE, historian Josephus attributed to Herod an abiding desire for recognition that led to his building compulsion. He surmised that Herod 'was very ambitious to leave great monuments of his government to posterity; whence it was that he was so zealous in building such fine cities, and spent such vast sums of money upon them' (Josephus, 2009, XV.9.5). Herod's successors, some of whom he also named after himself, continued his building enterprises thereby cementing his legacy and his reputation as 'great'.

Jesus ventures to the temple on three successive occasions in Mark's gospel. On the first day, he is escorted by a crowd of enthusiasts who attribute theological and historical importance to his appearance with mention of the 'name of the Lord'; they also project past glory into the near future by referencing the figure of 'our ancestor David'. As it is late in the day already, Jesus looks around the temple, then leaves (Mk 11.9-10). On the second day, Jesus disrupts the temple economy by evicting those who buy, sell, and change money. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, he affirms that the temple should be 'a house of prayer for all the nations', a passage in harmony with the predilections that informed Jesus' travels through Gentile territory after his encounter with the Syrophoenician woman. But instead the temple has become a preserve of plunder. The whole crowd seems to concur with this assessment which drives the chief priests and scribes to murderous design. After all, their livelihood depends upon business as usual (11.15-18).

The climactic conclusion to this assault upon the temple takes place, as the formula dictates, on the third day. All of Jesus' detractors are on the temple grounds and he contends with them, one by one. First the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders question his authority but are unable to discredit him because he plays upon the crowd's reverence for John the Baptist (11.27-33). Then Jesus tells a parable about the horrendous violence perpetrated against a vintner's enslaved labourers by the vineyard's putative caretakers. The vineyard owner sends last of all his beloved son, but the occupiers execute him and toss his body aside. When his detractors realize they have been called out by analogy as killers they yearn for Jesus' arrest; but they depart instead, rather than incite the crowd (12.1-12).

Next the Pharisees and the Herodians approach Jesus. Both the Pharisees and the Herodians advocated a version of political independence for the Jewish nation. In addition, the Herodians were partial to the political arrangements that prevailed under 'Herod the Great'. They sought, by implication, to make Israel great again through a return to what would have been—for a certain stratum of society, at least—the good old days. These two parties challenge Jesus about paying homage to Rome through taxation, a dilemma Jesus avoids by noting that coins have Caesar's image on them: so they (the coins, but also those who benefit from the Empire's economic exploitations) already belong to him (12.13-17).

Then the Sadducees, who don't even believe in resurrection in the first place, hypocritically ask Jesus a convoluted question involving resurrection (12.18-27). A scribe, overhearing the exchange with the Sadducees (who are also deeply devoted to the maintenance of temple ritual), asks Jesus a question about the essence of the Law. Approving of Jesus' response, the scribe declares that loving God and loving the neighbour as oneself 'is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices'—thereby rendering dubious, in his own words, the efficacy of the temple's central operations (12.28-34).

With no one else left to interrogate him, Jesus raises a general question of doctrine concerning the Christ. How, he asks, can the

Christ be the son of David when, according to Psalm 110, David calls the Christ 'Lord'? (12.35-37).[13] Here, in the heart of the city of David, Mark's Jesus subverts the notion of greatness as royal inheritance and rejects the idea that the Christ would be a king like David. Instead, Jesus has already told his disciples that the Christ 'must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again'—though Peter refused to accept this trajectory (8.31-33). Jesus warns of the danger posed by the scribes who revel in esteem and accumulate honour. Behind their façade of rectitude lurks a program of systemic violence that encourages the scribes to 'devour widows' houses' (12.38-40).

And finally, as capstone or cornerstone (12.10) on the third day: a portrait of generosity and human dignity emerges. As blatant counterpoint to the contestations that have escalated among males within the confines of the temple courtyards, at last a woman, a widow—perhaps even a homeless one—drops two small coins into the treasury (12.41-44). Against the background of the preceding bravado: a simple act. In contrast to lethal abundance of 'many rich people': a life-giving gift or even the gift of her whole life. Here the politics of hope begin, or entrance into the 'not yet' of the future (Sousa Santos, 2018, p.28; p.58). In the alternative imaginary the unnamed woman's act inaugurates, there will be no cause for devastation in the face of poverty because those who offer their lives for the sake of others will be surrounded by a community of persons who also love their neighbours as themselves. This is what the Gospel of Mark calls the 'kingdom of God'.

The unnamed woman who drops two small coins into the treasury has the last word in the temple.

This simple gesture fells the temple.

And so, during his exodus from the temple, Jesus remarks to his companions: 'Do you see these *great* buildings? There will not be

---

[13] This is the same name with which the Syrophoenician woman addressed Jesus (Mk 7.28).

left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down' (13.2).[14]

VI. The Woman with the Jar of Oil and the Nature of the Gospel

Shortly after his third excursion to the temple, Jesus and some of his disciples gather at Bethany in the house of a certain Simon the Leper, whose cognomen suggests a degree of social marginalization since lepers were considered unclean by prevailing conventions. But Jesus and those with whom he congregates venture across the abyssal line, as it were, that sentences others to the zone of nonbeing (Sousa Santos, 2018, p.20). While reclining, an unnamed woman approaches Jesus with an alabaster jar, unseals it, and proceeds to 'anoint his head with oil'. This semiotically rich gesture could involve hospitality, as in the language of the 23rd Psalm; or healing, as when the disciples anointed the sick and cured them during their early apostolic successes (Mk 6.13). In the Hebrew Bible, prophets traditionally anoint kings to office, as in the case of Samuel and David (1 Sam 16.13). Mark's Jesus, however, resists the inference of hierarchy that the kingly typology commands. In any case, the precise function of the action is not the immediate concern of some in Jesus' company. They complain that the oil, now wasted in a gesture of unrestrained extravagance, could have been

---

[14] The temple in Mark represents a system of corrupt practices and collusion with Rome. While it should be 'a house of prayer for all nations', according to Jesus who quotes Isaiah 57.6, it has been turned into 'a den of robbers' (Mk 11.17). According to Jesus, God wants the woman's two cents and, in particular, the generosity of heart her coins signify. Instead, the treasury elicits and privileges the donations of the oppressors, those who 'devour widows' houses' (12.39). But Mark's readers also know, historically speaking, that the temple has been destroyed by Roman forces. This provokes anxiety because the temple was also the headquarters of the burgeoning Jewish-Christian movement. Mark's gospel is written in part to reassure his readers that they don't need the temple *or the leaders of the Jerusalem church*—the representatives of which appear in the Gospel among Jesus' named disciples. Other people, almost all of them unnamed, have already left Jerusalem behind and have gone onward to Galilee (16.5), metaphorically speaking, and beyond. A fuller articulation of this conjecture, unfortunately, cannot be pursued here. In any case, it is important to note that the destruction of the temple is not an act of Christian supersessionism directed against Jews. It is a blow against Empire in its many forms, as already noted. It is also Empire's response to historical circumstances in 70 CE, when the advantages of a system of procuration had become outweighed by acts of rebellion.

exchanged in the marketplace for money that should have been given to the poor.

This seems at first like an uncharacteristically astute critique on the part of Jesus' disciples who have otherwise become increasingly baffled by Jesus' words and deeds during the long march to Jerusalem. Their concern here would seem to align with Jesus' ministry to the impoverished, the downtrodden, and the disinherited. And Jesus' harsh response to them seems also to align with the unkind words he had directed to the Syrophoenician woman back in Tyre. Jesus demands that they leave her alone, insisting that a decisive act has been performed by this unnamed anointer. He then makes a remark that has been used to justify contempt for the poor down the centuries: 'For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me' (14.7).

Is Jesus here expressing resignation in the face of a God-ordained system of inequality and disadvantage? If so, that would render pointless all that he and his followers have accomplished into this fourteenth chapter of Mark's gospel. If not, Jesus may be drawing upon a common resource to interpret the nature of the woman's deed. According to Moses' recapitulation of the law in the book of Deuteronomy, 'Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land"' (Deut 15.11). As long as there are those who are in need, there will be the opportunity—indeed, it is a matter of responsibility—to serve. Seen from this angle, this directive to care for the needy aligns with Jesus' call to be 'last of all and servant of all'. And indeed, Jesus interprets the unnamed woman's activity in this light.

The crucial matter here is the urgency of time. Jesus offered a qualitative distinction with regard to time when he made his inaugural proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark: 'The time has been fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near: repent and believe in the gospel' (1.15). The word 'time' in this instance, is *kairos*, or event; it is to be distinguished from the 'whenever you wish' (14.7), or *chronos*, of everyday life. In the house of Simon the Leper, Jesus attributes awareness of the

exceptional nature of this particular moment in time to the unnamed woman. She realizes that Jesus' time is almost up ('you will not always have me'); but she also knows what must happen next: she has anointed Jesus' body beforehand for its burial (14.8). And so the semiotically rich gesture of anointing in this instance involves preparation for burial. But the signification of the deed extends beyond the grave.

After Jesus returned from Gentile territory to the village of Bethsaida, he undertook with his disciples a brief sojourn to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way, he asked the disciples: 'Who do you say that I am?' to which Peter famously responded: 'You are the Christ' (8.29). But Peter's understanding of what this title entailed was severely limited. When Jesus declared 'that the Son of man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again', Peter refused to accept the trajectory of Jesus' narrative. The unnamed woman, on the other hand, recognizes and accepts the course of events as they are unfolding. And so beyond the exercise of mortuary inventiveness, the woman serves also as a prophet who makes Jesus the Christ—the *Christos*, or the *Messiah*—which means literally: the 'Anointed One'. He is anointed not as 'son of David', but rather as 'Son of man', as Jesus elaborated earlier (8.31) and designated elsewhere as the one who 'came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many' (10.45).[15]

VII. Conclusion: The Gospel of the Unnamed and the Subversion of Greatness

The realm of service to others is made manifest in the ministry of Peter's mother-in-law; in the Syrophoenician woman's care for her

---

[15] The title 'Son of man' is one that Jesus adopts for himself in Mark's narrative world; on occasion he also applies the term to others (e.g., Mk 2.28; 10.45). It is coordinated with the title Christ on more than one occasion (e.g., 8.29-32; 14.61-62). The term's resonances throughout the Gospel and in the Hebrew Bible are multiple, profound, and inclusive—despite the implications of gender that the designation bears. While retaining the title is important because of its development from the Hebrew Bible in Psalm 8 and Daniel 7, among others, a viable translation of the concept appears in the locution 'the new human being' as proposed by Waetjen (2014, p.xx).

daughter and Jesus' care—after a change of heart—for both of them; in the healing work of the unnamed exorcist; in the generosity of the widow's contribution. This realm is what Mark's Jesus calls the kingdom of God. It is a solidarity of all the righteous unnamed in Mark who respond to and embody the invitation to 'repent and believe in the gospel' (Mk 1.15). In the praxis of the unnamed anointer this kingdom is revealed. This is why Jesus says in Mark: 'wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her' (14.9). Not in remembrance of him: of her!

This is greatness as Mark's gospel portrays it: an act of service to the dying performed by a woman who shall remain anonymous. This simple gesture undoes the call to 'Make America Great Again'. Or, it invites America to imagine a different kind of greatness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: Biblical quotations are either the author's own translation or are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*. 1989. New York, NY: Oxford.

Alonso, P., 2011. *The Woman Who Changed Jesus: Crossing Boundaries in Mk 7, 24-30*. Leuven: Peeters.

Bennett, B., 2020. 2 June. President Trump's Big Moment in Front of a Church Shows He Has Missed the Point of the Protests. *Time* [online]. Retrieved from <https://time.com/5846449/trump-church-protests/> [Accessed 5 November 2023].

Fanon, F., 2021 [1963 orig.] *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York, NY: Grove.

Josephus, F., 2009. *The Antiquities of the Jews* (W. Whiston, Trans.). [e-book]. Retrieved from <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link2HCH0015> [Accessed 4 July 2023].

Justia Trademarks, 2015. *Make America Great Again*. Trademark Registration Filing Date 5 May, [online]. Retrieved from <https://trademarks.justia.com/867/16/make-america-great-86716074.html> [Accessed 4 July 2023].

Kerrick, K., 2022. (Trade)mark America Great Again: Should Political Slogans Be Able to Receive Trademark Protection? *The University of New Hampshire Law Review*, 18(2): pp.309-342.

King, M.L., 1965. 25 March. Our God is Marching On! Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/our-god-marching> [Accessed 4 July 2023].

Kruse, M., 2019. 14 June. The Escalator Ride That Changed America. *Politico*. [online]. Retrieved from <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4564395/user-clip-trump-you-famous-escalator-scene-escalator-looked-academy-awards> [Accessed 4 July 2023].

Lenski, G., 1984. *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina.

Lorenzini, D., 2015. What is a 'Regime of Truth'? *Le foucaldien* 1(1): pp.1–5. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.16995/lefou.2> [Accessed 5 November 2023].

M2M (Misogynoir to Mishpat Research Network), 2022. 21 March. *Decolonizing God Seminar*. [online]. Retrieved from <https://misogynoir2mishpat.wordpress.com/2022/03/17/decolonizing-god-seminar-march-21-2022/> [Accessed 5 November 2023].

Merritt, J., 2016. 15 April. Trump's Bible Fail. *The Atlantic*. [online]. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/04/trumps-bible-fail/478425/> [Accessed 4 July 2023].

Mignolo, W. and Walsh, C., 2018. *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Moss, C., 2023. 1 January. Was the Virgin Mary Actually a Slave? *The Daily Beast*. [online]. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailybeast.com/was-the-virgin-mary-actually-a-slave> [Accessed 5 November 2023].

Smith, M., 2017. Howard Thurman and the Religion of Jesus: Survival of the Disinherited and Womanist Wisdom. *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, 17: pp.271-291.

Smith, M., 2022. Abolitionist Messiah: A Man Named Jesus Born of a *Doulē*. In Smith, M., Parker, A., and Dunbar Hill, E. (eds.), *Bitter the Chastening Rod: Africana Biblical Interpretation after Stony*

the Road We Trod in the Age of BLM, SayHerName, and MeToo. Lanham, MD: Lexington and Fortress: pp.53-70.

de Sousa Santos, B., 2018. *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming Epistemologies of the South*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Trump, D., 2015. *Great Again: How to Fix Our Crippled America*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Trump, D., 2017. 20 September. President Donald J. Trump at the United Nations General Assembly: Outlining an America First Foreign Policy. [online]. Retrieved from <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-united-nations-general-assembly-outlining-america-first-foreign-policy/> [Accessed 4 July 2023]

Waetjen, H., 2014. [1989 orig.]. *A Reordering of Power: A Socio-Political Reading of Mark's Gospel*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

Washington Post Staff, 2015. 16 June. Full text: Donald Trump announces a presidential bid. *Washington Post*. [online]. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid/> [Accessed 4 July 2023]

William and Mary University, (n.d.). What is Decoloniality? *Decolonizing Humanities Project*, [online]. Retrieved from <https://www.wm.edu/sites/dhp/decoloniality/> [Accessed 5 November 2023]

BIOGRAPHY

A Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities in Edinburgh during the winter and spring of 2022, Theodore Louis Trost is Professor in Religious Studies and the New College at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. He teaches courses in religion and popular culture, biblical studies, perspectives in the humanities, and the rhetoric of religion. Recent publications include the essays 'Epiphany at the Capitol: Fight Songs for the Insurrection' and 'Notes on the Beatles' "White Album" in the Year 2022' in the booklet *Enduring Violence in America* (2023); the chapter '"Imagine There's No Countries": John Lennon's Politics of Love' in the book *Love Across the Atlantic: US-UK Romance in Popular Culture* (2020), which he also co-edited; and the article 'Theo-political Discourse and Rock 'n' Roll in the Reagan Era' (2018). He is currently working on a study of Mark's gospel.

BHARTI ARORA

Decolonial Praxis of Land Rights: Peasants' Negotiation with the Nation-State

Even as the colonised world order has formally ended, coloniality still dominates under the guise of preserving and promoting its 'fruits' of modernity, development, and progress across the world. It has entwined with global capital to forge a hegemonic structure of what Walter Mignolo (2018, p.141) calls 'the colonial matrix of power'. In this context, decoloniality becomes an effective tool to negotiate and challenge the ontological claims of western modernity precisely when the decolonisation of nation states fails to uphold heterogenous relationalities and local epistemes of these states.

In this light, immediate post-independence India was dominated by Nehruvian socialism whose credos were poverty alleviation and development. However, the spirit of democratic socialism often ran contrary to the pressures of state-sponsored capitalist development. Even as the state initiated land reform and redistributive measures to alleviate poverty, it equally pandered to the interests of indigenous elite and propertied classes. By late 1960s, the Mahalanobis Commission revealed that the Nehruvian state had failed to reduce inequalities of wealth, health or consumption, entering a phase of deinstitutionalization. This resulted in oppositional movements in the late 1960s-1970s like

anti-price rise campaigns, student activism, peasant uprisings, Dalit, Naxalite, Women's movements and the J.P. movement.

Reading Phanishwarnath Renu's *Parati: Parikatha* (*Tale of Wasteland*, 1957) and Shrilal Shukla's *Bisrampur ka Sant* (*Saint of Bisrampur*, 1998), this paper intends to explore their disparate politico-aesthetic orientations *vis-à-vis* peasantry and their centrality to the democratic imaginary of the state. The paper is an outcome of my research project pursued at IASH as a Charles Wallace India Trust Fellow[1]. During my visit, I specifically worked on Hindi fiction produced on and around the revolutionary decades of the 1960s-70s, mapping the complex character(s) of peasant movements in India. I chose to work on the selected novels as they explore the disparate contexts of village life in post-independence India, ranging across the disparate spectrum of class/caste, regional and bureaucratic inflections. By doing so, they discursively re-construct the nation-state as a symbolic and cultural terrain of meaning-making endeavours.

Even as scholarly work has been done on the literary representations of peasants and village life by Renu and Shukla, they have not been discussed using decolonial theory. The analytical approaches primarily comprise studies on peasants as subjects of Gandhian nationalism (Orsini, 2009), aspects of rural and regionalism (Jha, 2012), and elements of form, language, folk culture, and traditions (Hansen, 1978 and 1981). There are other perspectives that focus on the struggles of peasantry and how Nehruvian socialism and developmentalism led to a systemic betrayal of peasants (Vanashree, 2013 and 2015).

The chapter instead problematises these perspectives on village life and peasants' agitations by probing their everyday negotiations, exclusions and claims for land rights and equality (caste-gender-economic) vis-à-vis the institutional structures of the state from the perspective of decoloniality. By doing so, it discursively re-constructs the state as a symbolic and cultural

---

[1] The duration of the CWIT Fellowship was 1 January to 30 April 2022.

terrain of meaning-making endeavours. Thus the chapter highlights 'fissures of the dominant order, its decolonial cracks' (Walsh, 2018, p.24) which help forge 'struggles – political, epistemic, and existence based – against the colonial matrix of power' (ibid.) and the allied network of state institutions. It is divided into three sections exploring how the selected novels experiment with style and folklore on the one hand and languages on the other to offer decolonial perspectives on peasants' land rights, caste struggles, and allied frames of solidarities.

Renu is one of the most well-known Hindi regionalist writers, and his fiction experiments with language, form and style. He deploys diverse oral narrative traditions like songs, folklore and myths conveying a rich cultural tradition of the Purnea region in Bihar. His famous novels *Maila Anchal* (*The Soiled Border*, 1954) and *Parati: Parikatha*, written during the 'high noon of the Nehru era,' (Malhotra, 2011) recount the structural, material and technological transformations that have taken place in villages. They have often been termed 'linear narratives of modernity and Nehruvian development' (Jha, 2012, p.5). However, the strength of these narratives lays in how ingeniously they register the fault lines of nationalist euphoria. Additionally, Renu unfolds sub-narratives of common village folk: their naivety and aspirations of self-improvement in the wake of modernity, alongside their negotiations with the regional, caste, and gendered contexts of a newly independent country.

As an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Shrilal Shukla would engage with different departments and institutions of the state, which made him thoroughly familiar with the red tape, fraud, corruption, and structural indifference embedded in these institutions. As Vanashree states, 'An intuitive but astute analyst in him registers very clearly how our political and administrative system's persistent denial of autonomy and inherent value to this segment amounts to violence of a kind' (2012, p.59-60). Shukla is well-known for his powerful satirical novels, especially *Raag*

Darbari (1968), wherein he charts the terrain of failed idealism by foregrounding 'the utter failings of the ideals of nationalist state in their post-colonial implementation, and more drastically, in their post-Nehruvian disintegration' (Anjaria, 2006, p.4795). His novel *Bisrampur ka Sant* is set against the backdrop of the Bhoodan movement (voluntary land donation drive) launched by Vinoba Bhave in 1951 to propose a peaceful resolution to the Telangana peasants' rebellion (1946-51).[2] The narrative charts a dramatic transformation of its protagonist politician Kunwar Jayantiprasad Singh, from being an embodiment of the structural powers of the state and its violence during the height of his political career, to becoming a fantastical sage and/or a fictional residue of the state as he loses his potential to affect the (re)production of these powers.

The Lure and Critique of Land Rights and Nehruvian Developmentalism

VS Koshy (1974) informs that the government proposed poverty alleviation, economic self-reliance, and agricultural reform as its primary goals in the First Five Year plan (1951-56). 'India being predominantly an agricultural country with three-fourths of its population directly dependent on land and contributing 49 per cent of the total National Income, the problem of agricultural development assumes primary importance' (Koshy, 1974, p.43). It was significant, therefore, to deploy a social welfarist model of economy to achieve redistributive justice. However, the positive effects of democracy could not percolate to the villages. The report of the Taskforce on Agrarian Relations constituted by the Planning Commission of India (1973) admits: 'In no sphere of public activity in our country since independence has the hiatus between the precept and practice, between policy-pronouncements and

---

[2] Taylor C. Sherman informs us that as Bhave arrived in the village of Pochampalli [Telangana], 'several Dalit families attended the assembly he held and begged him to find a way to give them land. Vinoba did not know what to say, and he muttered something about approaching the government for assistance, "but then a sudden thought crossed his mind". He decided to ask others in attendance to donate land to the landless' (2016, p.8).

actual execution, been as great as in the domain of land reform' (qtd. in Koshy, 1974, p.45). Even as the government implemented land reforms, it primarily focused on the 'abolition of intermediary rights and regulation of tenancies, thereby leaving vast areas of land possessed by big landlords undisturbed' (Koshy, 1974, p.46). Suhas Chattopadhyay (1973) takes this argument further, stating that 'benefits of the laws for security of tenure could not be reaped by a large body of tenants because of the right of resumption for personal cultivation granted to the landlords in many states' (p.4). The landlords continued to lease out land in covert ways as 'statutory rent or the share of the crop payable by the tenant to the landlord was still high in some areas' (Chattopadhyay, 1973, p.4). Thus, landownership remained largely concentrated in the hands of privileged classes, pushing poor peasants, tenants, and sharecroppers to the brink of poverty.

The novels, however, are not interested in documenting these official failures. Instead, they foreground how these failures have had affective implications for people and their 'communal-cosmic praxes of living and thinking' (Mignolo, 2021, p.33). The novel *Bisrampur ka Sant* critiques the political posturing of leaders in post-independence India through the character of Jayantiprasad Singh. He belongs to a class of landed elites, and enters politics so that he could preserve his privileges and interests in the face of land reform measures. He masters the art of posturing to an extent that he loses his sense of distinction among real political issues, citizens' rights, and legislative commitment. When Jayantiprasad meets Vinoba Bhave for the first time 'he tries to appear as an "ordinary man", wearing a cotton khadi *kurta* and *dhoti*, with a white khadi silk jacket and starched Gandhi *topi* (cap). Jayantiprasad realised that this endeavour was unsuccessful but he chose not to worry about it' (Shukla, 2016, p.22). This further shows how Khadi, the Gandhian semiotic, which once stood for the 'Hindu idea of purity (lack of blemish, pollution), its coarseness symbolizing both simplicity and poverty' (Chakrabarty, 2001, p.27), gets appropriated by politicians in

post-independence India. As Dipesh Chakrabarty states, 'Achieving independence and the marginalization of any practice of Gandhian politics have made khadi less a matter of conscious discussion [...]. It now represents either a thoughtless habit of the politician or – if he is too conscious of his decision to wear *khadi*– his callous hypocrisy' (2001, p.28).

When Jayantiprasad learns about Bhave's Bhoodan movement, he, like so many landed elites of the period, donates barren land to the mission. The episode of land donation in the novel comes across as a telling comment on how rich landlords deployed the Bhoodan mission to serve their vested political interests. Even as the state endorsed these voluntary land donation drives, the lack of institutional vision and directives could not alter the hierarchical contexts of the extant agrarian dynamics. The movement miserably failed due to a lack of quality checks on the donated land, as well as the absence of a regulatory mechanism to ensure an uninterrupted supply of agricultural resources to peasants.

Jayantiprasad's act of donating barren land exposes his complicity with the structural violence embedded in the state's mandate that no landlord could be divested of his land and property rights without adequate compensation. In fact, he is 'politically' trained to see the poor and poverty only from the gilt-tinted perspective of aestheticism.

> Jayantiprasad was well versed with the innate art of the establishment,   which could reduce any complex human tragedy into accessible idioms and theoretical jargon. It is precisely this ability which makes us construct Adivasis as people related to folk art, agricultural labourers as alert gatekeepers of democracy and exploited women as nurturers of a revolutionary consciousness based in the future.
> (Shukla, 2016, p.65)

His official insensitivity towards the poor, therefore, is akin to the violence committed by state institutions that perceive the poor, Dalits, Adivasis, labourers and women as recipients of social welfare only.

Alternatively, Bhave's simplicity and commitment towards forging communitarian networks of solidarity and advocacy of peasants' rights in India indicates his fundamental belief in the living rights of all people. He explained,

> When a gift is given, we may hope that it will generate purity of mind, motherly love, feelings of brotherhood and friendliness and love for the poor. What would follow would be a transformation of the way people felt about the possession of property altogether, so that non-possession would become the ideal. (qtd. in Sherman, 2016, p.11)

Thus, Vinoba stands for the tenacity of egalitarianism on the one hand and politico-ethical consciousness of Gandhian ideals on the other. His Bhoodan movement, despite severe limitations, was testament to the continued relevance of non-violence and passive resistance in a post-independence context that retained the ascriptions of pre-modern hierarchies.

On a similar note, Phanishwarnath Renu's *Parati: Parikatha* highlights how the Land Survey and Settlement scheme launched by the British colonial government in 1885 and revised by the Indian Government in the 1950s was ridden with distortions. Even as tenants were entitled to claim their right over land after three years of continuous occupation, the institutional bias towards rich peasants or intermediary landlords affected an equitable distribution of land among actual tenants and workers (Renu, 2018, p.27). However, instead of lamenting the weakened and warped nodes of the legal and redistributive framework, the novel showcases how villagers manipulate these nodes to secure their rights over land and livelihood: 'Every child of the village has learnt to give a testimony in the court of survey and settlement.

The village has completely changed in the last six months. Never before, have father-son and brothers fought like this' (Renu, 2018, p.28). Also, it outlines the realisation that village labourers can get land only if they support the Congress party: 'everybody knows that those assisted by the Communist or Socialist parties will not be able to get even an inch of land' (Renu, 2018, p.30), betraying how land has acquired materialistic inflections in people's lives.

Even as the novel maps these transformations, it remains committed to recovering the local epistemes by which the village land and resources have been deeply entwined with people's ethico-ecological consciousness. By so doing, it defies the official categories of description and inscription from the first page itself. For instance, even as the narrator describes the land as barren - '*Dhusar, veeran, ant heen prantar... patita bhoomi, parati zameen, vandhya dharti- dharti nahin, dharti ki lash, jis par kafan ki tarah faili balucharon ki panktiyan*' ('A dusty, deserted, boundless tract. Fallen land, fallow land, barren earth. Not earth— a corpse of earth, shrouded by flocks of gulls' (Renu, 2018, p.1)), - he simultaneously calls it *kachhuapeetha zameen*, as in an ideal place, blessed by Gods, where *tantriks* or sorcerers can pursue their projects.

Paranpur is also a place where a variety of migratory birds from the Himalayan mountains land every year, adding colour and life to an otherwise barren land. The narrative therefore deploys a multi-hued lens to identify ways in which the village acquires, to borrow from Walter Mignolo, 'aesthesic' significance for all living beings. Mignolo describes aesthesis as 'perception by the senses' (2021, p.55). The aesthesis, in this instance, emerges from an entanglement of the human and beyond-human, motivating readers to re-view Renu's world in its daily transactions, wherein ephemeral flights and boundary crossings of migratory birds activate our ethics of relationality with others. The circular migration also facilitates restoration of nature's harmony and its living rights, thereby healing wounds wrecked by the developmentalist teleology. Thus, the novel attests to both the

sanctity and significance of activating the cultural memory of the region as against the developmental narrative of modernity propounded by the newly independent nation state.

This enables us to find a new approach towards the land ownership question as foregrounded in the novel. If Paranpur is barren, disgraced and fallow land, then what makes villagers desire this land? Even as we may perceive this desire within the larger framework of land ownership rights granted to tillers under the Constitutional Amendment, a land that is essentially barren cannot uplift them from their miserable circumstances. However, B.R. Ambedkar, India's First Minister for Law and Justice, submitted in the discussion on *The Report of Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes* 1953, which took place in Parliament on 6 September 1954, that there is a strong and consistent relationship between land and dignity: 'a person holding land has a higher status than a person not holding land' (qtd. in Kumar, 2020, p.41). Ambedkar further highlights how the land ownership question in the agrarian context is deeply entwined with ascriptions of caste, systemically affecting the ability of Dalits to both buy and own such lands: 'The Scheduled Castes must be settled on lands so that they might obtain independent means of livelihood, cease to be afraid of anybody, walk with their heads erect and live fearlessly and courageously' (qtd. in Kumar, 2021, p.41). Alternatively, Jawaharlal Nehru told the villagers who were to be displaced by the construction of the Hirakud Dam in 1948: 'if you have to suffer, you should do so in the interest of the country.'[3] Renu's novel problematises such state-sponsored capitalist discourses, proposing 'affective and aesthetic reconstitutions' to the land ownership question, in which a tiller's right to land is not simply defined within the purview of rights discourse (which could easily be flouted by rich landlords) but

---

[3] https://www.indiawaterportal.org/articles/damn-dams-say-displaced

what Andean indigenous thinkers[4] have called *vincularidad* (a linking or ethic of relationality). According to this ethics, land is not a profit-making machine, but entwined with the multifarious rhythms of life, communal wisdom and nature.

As the title of Renu's novel suggests, it is a legend of a fallow land. He borrows from the indigenous *katha* and *qissa* tradition, whereby multiple stories exist within each other based on the framework of entrelacement. This narrative framework is remarkably different from the conventional novel form based on a particularised beginning, middle and end. As Kathryn Hansen argues, 'Contained within that larger story are many lesser tales, each an independent tale in itself [...]. No one tale is essential to the forward movement of the plot, and yet together they create an elaborate narrative structure in which central plot material is densely overlaid by details and subplots' (1981, p.288). In the novel, legends, songs, oral narratives and folklore embed the socio-economic and cultural history of Pranpur and the communities living there. For instance, Renu portrays the myriad legends that have gone into historicising the river Kosi and its centrality to the landscape of Bihar. Often termed as the sorrow of Bihar, the Kosi river has been 'the cause of great suffering and devastation for generations' (Jha, 2012, p.20). Jha relates that 'large scale construction activities (especially building railway embankments) and irrigation measures adopted by the colonial state in the second half of the nineteenth century are cited as possible reasons behind the change in the Kosi's direction leading to destructive floods' (2012, p.9).

Parati: Partikatha documents the cultural memories associated with this destruction. It narrates the story of Kosi maiya (mother), who is a victim of domestic abuse. Even as she manages to escape the murderous attempts of her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law, she becomes inconsolable and acquires a destructive form.

---

[4] *Vincularidad* is a Spanish word used by Indigenous thinkers in the Andes to underscore the interrelations of all living organisms on the planet and their energy in common with the cosmos-life in itself (Mignolo 2021, p.537).

She engulfs whatever comes into her path, eventually reuniting with her younger stepsisters Dularidai and Kamala. The legend performs a significant role in not simply historicising the Kosi but also hinting at how human and technological interventions led by the dominant colonial/postcolonial governments have systematically resulted in changing its course through the centuries.

The novel reproduces these cultural memories towards the end when government representatives propose the construction of a dam, taming the waters of the Kosi. To this effect, Jitten Babu (the village landlord's son) convinces the villagers to collaborate and perform a play comprising each of these popular narratives of the Kosi and its allied folklore. Aiming to deploy the village's energies and labour for this new project, Jitten Babu seems no less than a harbinger of modernity. He is a modern citizen of a new India who projects his commitment to the nation state through embracing the role of what Satish Deshpande has termed 'the producer patriot' (1993, p.27). According to Deshpande, a noteworthy feature of Nehruvian socialism was that 'the nation is not only the locus for all this work, but it is also the end towards which this work is moving: patriotism is quite literally the act of building a nation' (1993, p.25). The performance at the end of the novel imbibes the spirit of this newfound patriotism:

> Fifth Cycle: Kosi is flowing, waves are dancing. A big group of half-naked people! Break the mountain, haiyo! Assemble stone*! We shall tame this Kosi...* Away from home. ...sweat and blood, put together! ...*Tame this witch*. Those who lost will be rehabilitated... A shadow, a dam emerges on the back!... the colour of the barren land is changing

gradually, slowly... green, red, yellow, velvet... green fields![5] (Renu, 2018, p.379; emphasis added)

One might be tempted to read Renu's novel as a celebratory account of modernity and Nehruvian developmentalism. However, the complex interplay of linguistic and literary experiments, popular memory, folklore and cultural narratives prevent us from making simplistic inferences. Interestingly, as suffering turns into rainbow colours, Kosi too transforms, from being a mother figure, or provider and victim of domestic abuse into a witch.

As the national fantasy of development creates new gods and mystifying centres of power, it also affects the harmony of the 'communal-cosmic' (Mignolo, 2021, p.33). Thus, the novel foregrounds an ethics of relationality, whereby human lives are deeply entwined with all living species, including nature. It further suggests how this construction of a dam and the allied narrative of development is contingent on participatory networks of democracy. Jitten rightly asserts, 'I would request workers of all political parties. Please do not abuse people's innocence for your vested interests. Compensation, rehabilitation and redistribution of land are matters wherein only you can protect people from red tapism and corrupt practices that are embedded in the governmental institutions' (Renu, 2018, p.365). Thus, democratic egalitarianism and participatory politics are deeply entwined with indigenous praxes of living.

National Language versus Everyday Registers of Communication

Amit Ranjan (2021) notes that after independence, it was deemed important to have a common language for the newly formed Indian nation state. The Constituent Assembly, set up in 1946 to

[5] I have borrowed the English translation from Sadan Jha's paper titled 'Visualising a Region: Phanishwarnath Renu and the archive of the 'regional-rural' in the 1950s'. Please see Bibliography for details.

draft the Constitution of India, engaged with the language question specifically to challenge the systemic dominance of English:

> The supporters of Hindi believed that it should be the 'national' language by virtue of its inherent superiority over other Indian languages and replace English for official union purposes immediately or in a very short time. (Ranjan, 2021, p.321)

Even as these claims to uphold Hindi as the national language were proposed in the guise of forging a decolonised identity, they were charged with an acerbic communal rhetoric. The rise of Hindi nationalism was instrumental in fabricating Hindi as the only language of Hindus, in opposition to Urdu that was 'branded as an alien language imported by the former invaders' (Ranjan, 2021, p.319). This branding systemically became so exclusive that Hindi was upheld as superior to not only Urdu but all regional languages.

It is noteworthy, however, that at a time when the Constituent Assembly raged with debate on the language question, proposing Hindi as the language of decolonisation and state inscription, writers like Renu punctured this official narrative by writing in Khadiboli and dialects such as Avadhi, Maithili, Bhojpuri and other adivasis' languages. Additionally, he sprinkled his narrative with Bengali and Nepali alongside English and Sanskritised Hindi. In *Parati: Parikatha*, Hindi is contrasted with particularised registers, dialects, and narratives, through which the villagers devise unique ways to challenge authority. The oral universe is symbolic of the everyday, wherein people deploy rural speech to not simply communicate with each other but also engage in meaning-making processes vis- à-vis dominant languages like Hindi and English. For instance, one of the lower caste characters Fekni ki mai (Fekni's mother) comments during a village brawl that upper caste people and Brahmins cannot take their privileges for granted after independence: 'Aab uu jamana nahi ki Bhaban-

Chhatri manmani karein aur solkanh log – aaki dekho, chhod ke baat kahe! Inquilaf to Inquilaf' (Renu, 2018, p.51) [this translates into English as follows: 'Times have changed now. Upper caste communities like Brahmin and Kshatriyas cannot have their way as per their whims. You should be careful before you speak. Inquilab'].

Even as the speaker belongs to a lower caste and is illiterate, she is conscious of the newly claimed rights of the Dalit community under the Constitutional provisions of equality. Renu thus not simply portrays rich linguistic variety, but also effectively demonstrates how each of these languages and/or dialects are intimately tied to the self-expression of communities. By doing so, he challenges the claims of Hindi nationalists, according to whom only Sanskritised Hindi could represent the nation's decolonised politics.

Renu's experiments with language are not dissimilar to other contemporary Hindi writers of the period such as Nagarjun (1911-98) and Rahi Masoom Raza (1927-92), who used regional languages like Bhojpuri, Maithili and Khadiboli *alongside* Hindi to distinguish upper-caste, educated, upwardly mobile characters from uneducated, illiterate villagers. However, this boundary between speakers of Hindi and regional dialects is not clearly demarcated but fuzzy. At times in the novel, Jitten lapses into Purbi (eastern) dialect or Bhojpuri while singing a folk song or interacting with villagers. Education also paves a way for linguistic and upward social mobility in society. Malari, a Dalit girl employed as a schoolteacher in the village government school, constantly switches between Hindi and rural speech depending upon her surroundings. Thus, Renu reproduces the diverse linguistic rhythms and polyglossia embedded in the speech patterns of people that had been lost from written Hindi in the course of the evolution of modern prose (Hansen, 1981, p.282).

Vasudha Dalmia (1997) and Francesca Orsini (1999) explain this process of Hindi's evolution during the late nineteenth and early

twentieth century in detail. They describe that there were dedicated public organisations responsible for evolving the Hindi public sphere, leading to the systematic construction and growth of Hindi as the language of journalism and literature. Additionally, as Orsini shows, writers like Bhartendu Harishchandra played a significant role in establishing a normative Hindi language which was to 'reject the language, content and aesthetics of Braj Bhasha poetry' (Orsini, 1999, p.411) and express new poetry and literature in Khadiboli. This further aligned with a systematic sanitisation of Hindi literature, which might instil suitable and inspiring feelings among readers. Alternatively, the rural characters of Renu's novel consider that the world of Sanskritised Hindi 'must be translated to be understood' (Hansen, 1981, p.276).

On a similar note, even as English words appear in Renu's narrative, they are meant to challenge the so-called educated reader's reverence towards English. For instance, district board appears as *distibot*, movement as *momant*, meeting as *mitin*, training as *tareni*, program as *pulogaram*. The villagers often sprinkle these words in their conversations to sound knowledgeable to others. As Garuddhuj, a character in the novel, states, "These days everyone adds a word or two of English when they speak, then why not Garuddhuj do so?" (Renu, 2018, p.38) What is noteworthy, however, is the fearless attitude towards speaking English. Renu punctures the official dominance of English by emphasising 'the gap between what the ear hears and the eye sees' (Hansen, 1981, p.277). In doing so, his novel demonstrates the discursive praxis of multilingual and pluralistic communities that cannot be smothered by the dominant claims of either Hindi nationalism or the bureaucratic officialese of English.

Violence of Bureaucratic Inscription in *Bisrampur ka Sant*:

Shrilal Shukla's *Bisrampur ka Sant* engages with the difference between bureaucratic inscriptions of the nation state on one hand and the resonance created by inter-personal communication on

the other. Resonance, as Hartmut Rosa defines it, 'is a dialogue between two or more independent entities, a dialogue that not only permits but even demands contradiction. [...] Resonance means not merging in unity but encountering another as an Other' (2019, p.447). The novel illustrates, through Jayantiprasad's trysts with politics, how he has lost any affective connection with the common people. Having failed at acquiring a new portfolio after completing his term as a state governor, he shifts his attention towards a small cooperative farm and ashram (monastery) constructed as part of the Bhoodan scheme in the 1950s. However, what begins as a ploy to garner media attention eventually turns into a quest for 'justice' when he realises that peasants, who are allotted land under the scheme, have lost it due to the corrupt dealings of government officers.

Even as Jayantiprasad is well-versed with the language of bureaucratic writing, he finds himself at a loss when it comes to writing for the peasants' rights. His complaint letters fall on deaf ears: 'He was hopeful that the district collector would immediately visit him upon receiving his letter. But it did not happen' (Shukla, 2016, p.125). As no government official takes his plea seriously, he experiences the violence of state inscription for the first time in his life. The novel through this incident, reflects how subaltern resistance and bureaucratic corruption are entwined together in ways that highlight structural violence against the poor. It also offers an insight into images, ideas and expectations that go into structuring the subaltern constructions of the state (Gupta, 2012, p.168).

Jayantiprasand confronts these constructions, realising the vacuity embedded in his efforts to resolve the crisis of cooperative farming. His proposal that the state could adopt the agricultural farm for restoration and development purposes finds few takers in bureaucracy. Additionally, the poor farmers find Jayantiprasad's solution against the very spirit of cooperative farming. As the caretaker of the farm states,

Had the management committee passed the proposal to expel the corrupt director and manager, recruiting genuine workers in its place, the spirit of democracy would have been upheld. However, now all the members have transferred their rights to decide for the farm to a government officer. It counters the spirit of cooperative farming. (Shukla, 2016, p.148)

Thus, Jayantiprasad is impelled to realise his complicity with the structural violence of state institutions. The novel highlights the insensitivity of the Indian political scenario, wherein the state and its representatives seldom strain to listen to the voices, perspectives, modes of existence and relationships as lived by citizens. This violence is instrumental in not only robbing the poor of their rights but also, in the words of Hartmut Rosa, jamming the basic wire of democracy: 'the resonant wire between politics or politicians and citizens thus turns out to be jammed from both ends, with each side influencing, impeding and manipulating but in general never actually reaching, touching, or moving each other' (2019, p.216).

It is noteworthy, however, that Shukla focuses more on offering a theoretical explanation of the peasants' issues in India. His experience as an administrative officer comes in useful here but it also reflects his systemic distance from the actual lives, concerns and resistance mechanisms of the poor. Even as we find references to the land woes of a farmer named Ramlotan, he is not invested with unique character traits and an active subaltern consciousness. After losing his land to zamindar Dubey's manipulations of the Cooperative farming project (under the aegis of the *Bhoodan* movement), Ramlotan resorts to becoming a rickshaw puller. In absence of legal literacy and training, Ramlotan makes peace with his destiny, 'I am afraid of nothing else but paper work. I do not know how a mere piece of paper could snatch my land away. The minister knows about it. He might be able to tell you in detail' (Shukla, 2016, p.114)

Since the novel is generally presented from the point of view of Jayantiprasad, we rarely get a glimpse into Ramlotan's subjectivity and perceptions of the state. His deployment of violence towards the end appears as a cynical ploy, whereby Shukla reiterates his derision for the shortcomings and failures of the Bhoodan movement: 'how ironical it is that the peasants' agitation has come full circle; from the point when armed rebellion began in Telangana to Bisrampur where, despite village donation drives, farmers have yet again been forced to raise arms to reclaim their land' (Shukla, 2016, p.152). However, by dismissing the Bhoodan movement as a failed endeavour, the novel misses out on discerning its centrality to the praxis of decolonisation. As Sherman (2016, p.17) notes, Bhave's initiative was not an idealist experiment. Instead, he was deeply aware how a self-sufficient economy based on the decentralisation of powers and trade practices could systematically liberate India from the clutches of neo-imperialism and the violence associated with it.

Bhave suggested that the Government of India ought to declare particular areas as reserved for setting up of industries, meaning only those villages that actually produced the required raw materials could be allowed to develop these industries. Furthermore, they were supposed to be utilising renewable resources only. He argued that economies based on non-renewable resources such as iron or coal led to depletion of natural resources, competition and ultimately violence (Sherman, 2016, p.15). Thus, the Bhoodan movement was a strategic component in Bhave's efforts towards achieving decentralisation of the nation state.

The Bhoodan movement was contingent on a strong decolonial praxis, comprising ethical modes of production and consumption. In doing so, it proposed a reconstitution of the indigenous praxes of living that had been disrupted by the colonial governance model. As Walter Mignolo affirms, 'The idea of thinking decolonially (hence the politics of decolonial investigations) [...] comes from ancestral indigenous knowledge, peasants knowing

through experience (empiricism), not from ritualized or bureaucratized European practices or from the pathological culture fostered by profit-seeking transnational corporations' (2021, p.275). This offered a strong potential to liberate postcolonial India from the tyranny of the nation state model.

Thus, both Renu's *Parati Parikatha* and Shukla's *Bisrampur Ka Sant* offer a renewed understanding of literary aesthetics by incorporating a pluriversal conception of language, culture and nationalism. They further problematise the violent repercussions of bureaucratic prescriptions for the poor. By so doing, the novels remap the socio-economic and cultural histories of specific communities, narratives of caste oppression as well as their myriad frames of solidarity. This approach is fundamental to reconstituting people-centric gnoseological paradigms of knowing and ways of being (Mignolo, 2021, p.25), which have otherwise been systemically marginalised by the dominant politico-economic and cultural registers of the nation-state.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anjaria, U., 2006. Satire, literary Realism and the Indian state: six acres and a third and *Raag Darbar*i. *Economic and Political Weekly,* 41(46): pp.4795-4800.

Chakrabarty, D., 2001. Clothing the political man: a reading of the use of khadi/white in Indian public life. *Postcolonial Studies*, 4(1): pp.27-38.

Chattopadhyay, S., 1973. On the class nature of land reforms in India since independence. *Social Scientist*, 2(4): pp.3-24.

Dalmia, V., 1997. *The nationalization of Hindu traditions: Bhartendu Harishchandra and nineteenth century Banaras.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Deshpande, S., 1993. Imagined economies: styles of nation building in 20th century India. *Journal of Arts and Ideas,* 25-26: pp.5-34.

Gupta, A., 2012. *Red tape: bureaucracy, structural violence, and poverty in India.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hansen, K., 1978. Phanishwarnath Renu: the integration on rural and urban consciousness in the modern Hindi novel. Ph.D. University of California, CA. Available at: <academia.edu/5680172/Phanishwarnath_Renu_The_Integration_of_Rural_and_Urban_Consciousness_in_the_Modern_Hindi_Novel> [Accessed 30.01.2022]

Hansen, K., 1981. Renu's regionalism: language and form. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 40(2): pp.273-294.

Jha, S., 2012. Visualising a region: Phanishwarnath Renu and the archive of the 'regional-rural' in the 1950s. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review,* 49(1): pp.1-35.

Koshy, V.C., 1974. Land reforms in India under the plans. *Social Scientist,* 2(12): pp.43-61.

Kumar, A., 2020. B.R. Ambedkar on caste and land relations in India. *Review of Agricultural Studies,* 10(1): pp. 37-56.

Malhotra, I., 2011. High noon of the Nehru era. *Indian Express,* 25 April. Available at: <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/high-noon-of-the-nehru-era/780831/>

Mignolo, W.D., 2018. What does it mean to decolonize? In Mignolo, W.D. and Walsh, C.E. (eds.), *On decoloniality: concepts, analytics and praxis.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press: pp.105-135.

Mignolo, W.D., 2021. *The politics of decolonial investigations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Renu, P., 1957/2018. *Parati: Parikatha*. Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan.

Rosa. H., 2019. *Resonance*: *A sociology of our relationship to the world*. Trans. J.C. Wagner. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Orsini, F., 1999. What did they mean by 'public': language, literature and the politics of nationalism. *Economic and Political Weekly,* 34(7): pp.409-416.

Orsini, F., 2009. *The Hindi public sphere 1920-1940: language and literature in the age of nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

 Ranjan, A., 2021. Language as an identity: hindi-non-hindi debates in India. *Society and Culture in South Asia,* 7(2): pp.314-337.

Sherman, T.C., 2016. A Gandhian answer to the threat of communism? Sarvodaya and postcolonial nationalism in India. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review,* 53(2): pp.1–22.

Shukla, S*.,* 1998/2016. *Bisrampur Ka Sant.* Rajkamal Paperbacks.

Vanashree, 2012. Shrilal Shukla: An aesthete and a visionary. *Indian Literature*, 56(2): pp.58-64.

Vanashree, 2013. Writing rural poverty: 'Hori' of godan in shrilal shukla's 'hori aur unnis sau chourasi'. *South Asian Review,* 34(1): pp.95-128.

Vanashree, 2015. Struggling peasantry in literary narratives. *Indian Literature,* 59(4): pp.182-200.

Walsh, C.E., 2018. The decolonial *for*: resurgences, shifts, and movements. In Mignolo, W.D. and Walsh, C.E. (eds.), *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics and Praxis.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press: pp.15-32.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Bharti Arora teaches at the Department of English, University of Delhi, India. She was the Charles Wallace India Trust Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh (2022). Her areas of research include Gender Studies, Women's Fiction, Indian Literatures, Social Movements, and Nation. Her articles have appeared in journals like *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *South Asian Review*, and *Society and Culture in South Asia*. She is the author of *Writing Gender, Writing Nation: Women's Fiction in Post-Independence India* (Routledge, 2019).

JAYITA SARKAR

The Rohingyas in Decolonisation as a Moment, Process and Movement

This essay explores decolonisation through its many prisms while focusing on the statelessness of the Rohingya people of present-day Myanmar through their role within irregular armies of the British military in World War II. The territorial metamorphosis of borderlands to bordered lands in Arakan mediated by the spectacular violence of global war made the Arakanese Muslims, or Rohingyas, as they are known today, foreigners in their own lands. Courted by the Japanese with promises of a 'Pakistan,' and later trained and armed by the British Military Administration of Arakan, the Rohingyas emerged out of the war with dreams of new political futures that were out of place in South Asia at the cusp of formal decolonisation. Decolonisation as a process transformed the Rohingyas into smugglers and insurgents, their circular migration obstructed by carceral regimes of borders and checkpoints. Decolonisation as a movement through revisionist histories from the ground-up that reinstate the disenfranchised as historical agents in stories of their own plight, could help recover the experience of the Rohingya people as cosmopolitan actors with a shared maritime heritage spanning across the eastern Indian Ocean world.

During the first two decades of the twenty-first century, news from Arakan or Rakhine has been rife with those of human suffering in the forms of poverty, ethnic violence, and state repression.[1] Images of Rohingya villages being burned by the Myanmar military, often aided by Rakhine Buddhists, have made headlines while boatloads of Rohingya refugees have continued to arrive in Bangladesh, often in crescent-shaped watercraft, overwhelming refugee camps in and around Cox's Bazaar.[2] Many desperate Rohingya refugees have made treacherous journeys through the turbulent waters of the Bay of Bengal to Malaysia, Indonesia, and elsewhere. Despite the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein calling the policies of the Myanmar government a textbook example of ethnic cleansing in 2017, the Rohingyas have remained undesirable everywhere they have set foot. In March 2023, a devastating fire, claimed to have been sabotage and destroying the 'world's largest refugee camp' in Cox's Bazaar, has shown that Rohingyas are not safe even in refuge (BBC News, 2023). How did they get here? What can their complex past tell us about their present misfortunes and bleak futures?

This experimental historical essay uncovers the history of the Rohingya people through three interconnected vignettes from World War II in Arakan or the Rakhine state as it is known today. These vignettes embody decolonisation as a moment, process, and movement — its promises, deliveries, and shortcomings.[3] Together they manifest multiple idioms of decolonisation: a teacher picking up arms to stay rooted in a shapeshifting place transformed by war; a cosmopolitan elite wrestling with mobilities and boundedness; a bureaucrat representing a fragmented state

---

[1] For a recent history of the Rohingya people's migration and refuge-related woes, see Kaamil Ahmed, *I Feel No Peace: Rohingya Fleeing Over Seas & Rivers* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2023).
[2] Heart-breaking images of the Rohingyas' plight caught global attention and journalism accolades, such as the Pulitzer Prize for Reuters: "Reuters wins Pulitzer for photography of Rohingya crisis," *Reuters*, 16 April 2018.
[3] *Decolonization@60* Symposium, Roundtable, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 14 December 2020.

in the watery borderlands as British and Japanese militaries fight gruesome battles. The essay discusses how war, decolonisation and partitions of South Asia affected the Rohingyas' political claims and visions of their futures.

The Arakan frontier between Burma and India was a battlefield of China-Burma-India theatre of the Second World War. Where Burma ended and India began, the frontier was geopolitically significant for both British and Japanese militaries. The British wanted to prevent Japanese incursion towards India, while the Japanese wanted to cross over from Arakan to Bengal and Assam. These imperial ambitions had serious consequences for Muslim-Buddhist communal relations in Northern Arakan. Rohingyas or Arakanese Muslims both transformed the Second World War, formal decolonization, and partition nearly as much as these systemic processes transmuted them (Sarkar, 2023). As the Burma-India frontier first became a battlefield and then a borderland, the Rohingyas found themselves in the midst of transformative political changes that would change their lives forever.

People and Places in Global War

A schoolteacher in Arakan, in the north-western part of Burma, picked rifles over pens in the summer of 1942 (Murray, 1971). War had arrived in his coastal hometown of Maungdaw through refugees fleeing Japanese troops in the south, in quest of an escape route to British India (Tinker, 1975). The schoolteacher's name was Omra Meah — a self-righteous man in his early 30s with strong convictions. Together with Nur Ahmed and Munif Khan, Meah established a peace committee in Maungdaw to maintain law and order amidst the disorder of global war.

Omra's rival, Esmail Dawood Shah Maracan, led his own peace committee to manage affairs in Lambaguna, located inland of

Maungdaw.[4] Maracan's family owned large swathes of land in Arakan, while he nurtured political ambitions, oscillating between loyalty toward the British and the Japanese. He was of Chulia origin from the Coromandel coast of southern India, belonging to one of the many diasporic trading communities that had dotted the Indian Ocean world for generations. During the war, suspicious of his loyalty, the British government sent Maracan back with his family to the French Indian territory of Karaikal, from where he hailed.[5]

War also brought A.A. Shah, an elite bureaucrat of the British colonial state, to Arakan. The wartime British military decision to train Arakanese Muslims or Rohingyas into irregular armies against the Japanese made Shah the only civilian partially in charge of a strictly military operation.[6] Loaned by the Bengal government that wanted little to do with military activities in Northern Arakan, Shah's remit was wide but unwritten. Without Shah, the British Military Administration of Northern Arakan could not have functioned. Through him, new dreams of political futures took root which the Rohingyas had not envisioned so palpably before the war. Unlike his suspicion of Maracan, Shah trusted Meah, but remained deliberately ambiguous about what would happen to the people and place once Allied war aims were attained.[7]

War, partition and decolonisation in South Asia were entangled, although disparate threads of historiographies divide them into neat time periods of 1939-45 (war), 1946-47 (partitions), and 1947-48 (decolonisation) respectively. The historiographical

---

[4] File 21/19/42-Poll(I): Letter from T.B. Jameson, District Magistrate Chittagong, to J.R. Blair, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 6 June 1942; NAI, File 21/19/42-Poll(I): Note prepared by T.B. Jameson, 5 June 1942, NAI.
[5] File 46/3/43-Poll(9): Arrival from Arakan of Mr E.D.S. Maracan in Karikal and Proposal to Secure his Ejection from there Into British India and Keep Him Under Surveillance, 22 April 1943, NAI.
[6] NAI, File 21/19/42-Poll(I): Telegram from Bengal, Calcutta to Home Department, New Delhi, 30 June 1942, NAI.
[7] File 21/19/42-Poll(I): Diary of Mr. A.A. Shah on a military mission in Northern Arakan, 9 July 1942, NAI.

universe gives the impression that the three existed in parallel worlds, which only collided accidentally. The reality was different.

Decolonisation as 'Independence' and Thereafter

Decolonisation as a moment in South Asia is today commemorated as 'independence days' in the nation-states that had emerged between 1947 and 1948 in the subcontinent. It is a celebration of freedom in the narrow sense of political sovereignty—the Union flag rolling down while the Indian, Pakistani, Burmese, or Ceylonese flags being hoisted amidst emphatic cheers of joy.[8] In the attenuated sense, decolonisation as a moment is the end of European empires and the beginning of rule by a postcolonial elite either carefully trained to execute its duties by the departing colonial power (for example, India in 1947), or deliberately prevented from doing so (such as Congo in 1960).

Etymologically, decolonisation, *décolonisation*, and *gegenkolonisation* embodied the status-quoist project of managing European imperial retreat in a changing world order transformed by the First World War, the false Wilsonian promise of national self-determination, and the rising tide against colonial rule among non-Europeans (Ward, 2016). German historian Moritz J. Bonn used 'counter-colonization' and 'decolonization' interchangeably in the 1930s. Writing from his refuge at the London School of Economics after being compelled to leave Nazi-ruled Germany, Bonn described the 'decolonization movement' as the 'age of empire breaking' (Ward, 2016, p.239). His sympathies were with Germany and what he perceived to be its unfair

---

[8] See for example, these examples of British Pathé video footage of Indian independence from 1947, Ceylon's independence from 1948, and Lord and Lady Mountbatten's tour of Burma after its independence from 1948: https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/71507/ (last accessed March 16, 2023); https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/69598/ (last accessed March 16, 2023); https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/139209/ (last accessed March 16, 2023).

treatment at the Paris Peace Conference, and not with victims of contemporaneous violence in the colonies such as the Amritsar Massacre in British India. The term did not become popular in public discourse until the 1950s, when one French colonial administrator publicly hoped for a 'friendly decolonisation' or *décolonisation aimable* in Algeria (Labouret, 1952, p.19). Its first mention in the UK House of Lords revealed metropolitan anxieties about turbulent territorial losses, when Conservative Lord Hastings claimed 'de-colonisation' to be 'miserable,' 'pathetic,' and a 'negative attitude.'[9]

The view from the colonies was not that of decolonisation. Anticolonial leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Kwame Nkrumah, Ho Chi Minh, Sukarno, and others were striving for 'independence' or 'liberation' through protracted and often violent 'freedom struggles' — not for decolonisation. A key figure in the Algerian war, Frantz Fanon, strongly opposed the French metropolitan desire for a 'friendly decolonisation' in his masterpiece *Wretched of the Earth*, when he unequivocally claimed that decolonisation was always going to be a violent phenomenon because of the intrinsic violence within colonisation itself (Fanon, 1963; Fanon, 1958). Influenced by violent colonial repressions of anticolonial leaders and groups in Algeria, Congo, Kenya and elsewhere, Fanon adopted 'decolonisation' into the radical lexicon for subversion of the colonial state (Ward, 2016, 254-56).

Ironically, as political sovereignty dawned in former colonies and anticolonial leaders became national statesmen at the helm of their own independent governments, 'decolonisation' became synonymous with 'fissiparous tendencies' in the borderlands.[10] New nation-states such as India, Burma, Indonesia, and others,

---

[9] Hansard, 5th ser. (Lords), ccxxviii, col. 468 (8 Feb. 1961), cited in Ward, "The European Provenance of Decolonization," p.252.

[10] On this subject, see: Lydia Walker, 'Decolonization in the 1960s: On Legitimate and Illegitimate Nationalist Claims-Making', *Past & Present*, Vol. 242, Issue 1 (February 2019): 227–264; 'Minority Nationalisms in Postwar Decolonization', *AHR History Lab, Rethinking Nationalism* (March 2022): 351-54.

faced renewed calls for 'independence' — this time within their own borders. This meant that to the new national leaders no further decolonisation was permissible if the body politic was to survive. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 on decolonization adopted in December 1960 thus had its fissures, despite being a milestone. Global solidarities such as the Nonalignment Movement, a key marker of South-South solidarity, had internal tensions between the 'haves' and 'have-nots,' based on who had a sovereign nation-state at their disposal and who did not (Byrne, 2015).

Decolonisation as a process is an unfinished project that can fortify as well as disenfranchise. It embodies the precarity of rights, enforced through borders (Ramnath, 2023). It may lead to new forms of citizenships and refuge, on the one hand, and deportation, statelessness and ethnocide, on the other. It is situational, insatiable and fickle. As a process, the Rohingyas' alienation from the body politic of Burma was interlaced with their role in irregular armies in the Second World War supporting the British military in Northern Arakan (Sarkar, 2023). The war made Arakan a cosmopolitan social space, bringing new awareness of identities and igniting new political desires that would have long afterlives. The 81st (West African) Division took part in active combat duties to fight the Japanese for the British Empire. The Punjab Regiment recruited guerrillas for the V Force. The Gurkha-dominated Eastern Frontier Rifles tried to keep peace between Arakanese Muslims (Rohingyas) and Buddhists, often exacerbating instead of reducing tensions.[11]

As borders began to harden between Arakan and Chittagong with the Japanese exit and return of British rule in Burma in 1945, Omra Meah and his compatriots, who called themselves "mujaheds" or freedom fighters— much like the anticolonial fighters in the Algerian war would a decade later—became

---

[11] File 21/19/42-Poll(I): "Subject: Raising of Guerrilla Organisation in Arakan Hill Tracts," 2 July 1942, NAI.

insurgents in the eyes of the colonial and postcolonial states. A.A. Shah did not re-emerge in the archives in post-war Arakan. The loyal representative of the colonial state likely struggled to understand his own place in decolonizing South Asia. Forced migration and communal violence of partition upended post-war civilian life in Bengal as early as 1946. More violence transpired in Punjab in 1947.

Meah's resurgence after the war was remarkable. His wartime training in guerrilla tactics, political mobilization and diplomacy transformed him from a schoolteacher to an influential nationalist leader. He articulated in no uncertain terms his claims to a future Muslim polity dissociated from Buddhist lands of Burma.[12] He even sought to forge solidarities with the Wazirs in the Northwest Frontier Province along the border with Afghanistan, who were violently agitating for political freedom within the new nation-state of Pakistan.[13] By the end of 1948, the Burmese military regularly targeted Arakan Mujaheds such as Meah as dangerous separatists who harmed national unity. The Burmese state armed the Arakanese Buddhists against the Muslims, thus mobilising one ethnic minority to violently alienate another.[14] Almost four decades prior to the Rohingyas' legal disenfranchisement through the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law, the Burmese state laid the groundwork for state-sanctioned Muslim-Buddhist civil strife over who rightfully belonged to the body politic.[15]

---

[12] DO 142/453: Pol 10550/48, II Border Affairs, Extract from Report from Deputy High Commissioner in Dacca on events in E. Bengal (Enc. To Despatch No. 240), 5 September 1948, UK National Archives, Kew (UKNA).

[13] FO 371/83115, Note No. 51 from James Bowker at UK Embassy in Rangoon to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ernest Bevin, 12 February 1949, UKNA.

[14] DO 142/453: Pol 11743/48, Extract from Report No. 43 for the period ending 31 October 1948, from Deputy High Commissioner in Pakistan; Savingram from UK High Commissioner in Karachi, Pakistan to Commonwealth Relations Office, 245 Saving, 17 December 1948, UKNA.

[15] Burma Citizenship Law, 1982, English translation of Pyithu Hluttaw Law No. 4 of 1982, 15 October 1982, https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4f71b.html (last accessed 16 March 2023).

Decolonisation Activism

In 2023, decolonisation generates emotional exhaustion in many despite one's intellectual affinity for the term's broader goals of antiracism, social equality, and economic redistribution. Rarely used as a noun, its predominant contemporary usage is as a verb. It requires action: decolonise it! It expresses fervency for social change and at times weariness toward measured responses. The underlying impatience to 'decolonise X' is hardly surprising given persistent inequalities in wealth, infrastructure, health, and wellbeing between countries that were former colonial powers and those that were previously colonized— a gap rendered painfully visible by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet among scholars, there is little consensus. While some participate in roundtables on 'decolonizing Britain,' others publish sharp critiques against the 'decolonization movement' (Linstrum et al, 2022; Táíwò, 2022). Universities in Western Europe and North America are investigating their ties to wealth created through enslavement and colonialism, while their human resources and public relations arms are preoccupied with co-opting decolonisation into their equality, diversity, and inclusion metrics, ensuring that no social movement goes to waste.

How to salvage decolonisation, then? How could we reinstate at least some of its revolutionary fervour following Fanon? More than a decade ago, tired of the 'decolonial' lens adopted by settler scholarship, Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck along with Ethnic Studies expert K. Wayne Yang wrote that decolonisation was 'not a metaphor' (Tuck and Yang, 2012). They argued forcefully that decolonisation was meaningless unless it centred land repatriation. Following their influential work, centring the disenfranchised as actors with agency in their own stories could be one way to write the voiceless and the invisible *back* into history.

In an age of nation-states, cosmopolitan actors of the Indian Ocean world with multiple belongings, such as the Rohingyas in

Arakan, Chulias in Coromandel, and Moors in Ceylon, were held at fault. To which body politic did they *really* belong? What were their loyalties? Why were they Muslim in a predominantly Buddhist land? Why was their language distinct?

The liminalities of his identity made E.D.S. Maracan less trustworthy to A.A. Shah in wartime Arakan. His forced deportation to Karaikal and then informal surveillance by British authorities in French India revealed the material dimensions of state suspicion of those that had heterogenous identities.

The deliberately vague promises of political autonomy in return for the Rohingyas' wartime support for the British military campaigns were never made to be kept by the colonial state. Designated as neither settler nor native, deprived of even the legal status of a permanent minority within present-day Myanmar, they remain suspended in perpetual transience.[16] At the mercy of international nongovernmental organisations, local civil society groups, and an overwhelmed Bangladesh government that is resettling them on a precarious silt island that could be swept away by the next tropical cyclone, the Rohingyas have no safe haven (Bremner, 2020).

Yet the Rohingya language is a medley of various cultural and linguistic cosmologies, similar to Chittagongian in Bangladesh (Sarkar, 2019; Sarkar, 2023). It is a universe of possibilities that can centre social histories of the entrepôt of Chittagong and what that meant for the imbrication of many identities for those who inhabited that space (Sivasundaram, 2017; Van Schendel, 2015). It is a complex history of those who have lived for centuries on the frontiers of multiple empires (Mughal and Mrauk-U; British Bengal and Arakan) and survived as borderlanders in between colonial and postcolonial nation states (British India and Burma; East Pakistan and Burma; Bangladesh and Burma), only to be rendered

---

[16] Rohingyas do not fit in Mamdani's framework (2020) of political modernity. They do not belong as settler, native, or minorities.

stateless in their own homeland. Decolonisation as a movement could centre and celebrate their liminalities, instead of normalising a mere 100-year history of the nation-state.

REFERENCES

Articles, Books, and Book Chapters

Ahmed, K., 2023. *I Feel No Peace: Rohingya Fleeing Over Seas & Rivers* London: Hurst Publishers.

Bremner, L., 2020. Sedimentary logics and the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, *Political Geography*, 77: pp.102-109.

Byrne, J.J., 2015. Beyond Continents, Colours, and the Cold War: Yugoslavia, Algeria, and the Struggle for Non-Alignment, *International History Review*, 37(5): pp.912-932.

Fanon, F., 1958. Décolonisation et indépendance, *El Moudjahid*, 16 Apr.

Fanon, F., 1963. *Wretched of the Earth*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Labouret, H., 1952. *Colonisation, colonialisme, décolonisation*. Paris: Larose.

Linstrum, E., Ward, S., Ogle, V., Nasar, S. & Gopal, P., 2022. Decolonizing Britain: An Exchange, *Twentieth Century British History*, 33(2): pp.274–303.

Mamdani, M., 2020. *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mitra, S., Sarkar, S. & Ganguli-Mitra, A., 2023. On the need for an anticolonial perspective in engineering education and practice. *Nature Communications,* 14(1), 8453.

Murray, P. British Military Administration of North Arakan, 1942-43, Note by Peter Murray, Deputy Military Administrator of North Arakan, 1942-44, 1/11/1971,

<https://www.networkmyanmar.org/ESW/Files/peter-murray-1980.pdf> (last accessed March 12, 2023).

Sarkar, J., 2023. Battlefields to Borderlands: Rohingyas between Global War and Decolonisation. In Guyot-Réchard, B. and Leake, E. (eds.), *South Asia Unbound: New International Histories of the Subcontinent.* Leiden: Leiden University Press: pp.103-123.

Ramnath, K., 2023. *Boats in a Storm: Law, Migration, and Decolonization in South and Southeast Asia, 1942–1962.* Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

Sivasundaram, S., 2017. Towards a Critical History of Connection: The Port of Colombo, the Geographical 'Circuit,' and the Visual Politics of New Imperialism, ca. 1880-1914, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 59: pp.346-384.

Táíwò, O., 2022. *Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously.* London: Hurst.

Tinker, H., 1975. "A Forgotten Long March: The Indian Exodus from Burma, 1942", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 6: pp.1-15.

Tuck, E. and Yang, K.W., 2012. Decolonisation is Not a Metaphor, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1): pp.1-40.

van Schendel, W., 2015. Spatial Moments: Chittagong in Four Scenes. In Tagliacozzo, E., Siu, H.F., and Perdue, P.C. (eds.), *Asia Inside Out: Changing Times.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: pp.101-02.

Walker, L., 2019. Decolonization in the 1960s: On Legitimate and Illegitimate Nationalist Claims-Making, *Past & Present*, 242(1): pp.227–264.

Walker, L., 2022. Minority Nationalisms in Postwar Decolonization, *AHR History Lab*, Rethinking Nationalism: pp.351-354.

Ward, S.J., 2016. The European Provenance of Decolonization, *Past & Present*, 230: pp.227-260.

News and Popular Writings

'UN human rights chief points to "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" in Myanmar', *UN News*, 11 September 2017.

'Reuters wins Pulitzer for photography of Rohingya crisis', *Reuters*, 16 April 2018.

Ng, K., 'Rohingya camp fire was "planned sabotage" – investigators', *BBC News*, 13 March 2023.

Sarkar, J., 'How World War II shaped the crisis in Myanmar', *Washington Post*, 10 March 2019.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Jayita Sarkar is Senior Lecturer in Global History of Inequalities at the University of Glasgow. Her research and teaching areas are global and transnational histories of decolonisation, capitalism, and nuclear infrastructures. Her first book *Ploughshares and Swords. India's Nuclear Program in the Global Cold War* (Cornell University Press, 2022) won the 2024 Bernard S. Cohn Book Prize from the Association for Asian Studies and 2023 Honorable Mention for Global Development Studies Book Award from the International Studies Association. She is currently writing two books: *Atomic Capitalism: A Global History* (under contract, Princeton University Press) and *Partitions: A Global History of Territoriality*. Prior to joining Glasgow, Dr Sarkar was Assistant Professor at Boston University. She was a Nominated Fellow at IASH from June to August 2022.

Forthcoming in 2025

Essays on Decoloniality: Volume 2, edited by Ben Fletcher-Watson, Lesley McAra and Désha Osborne
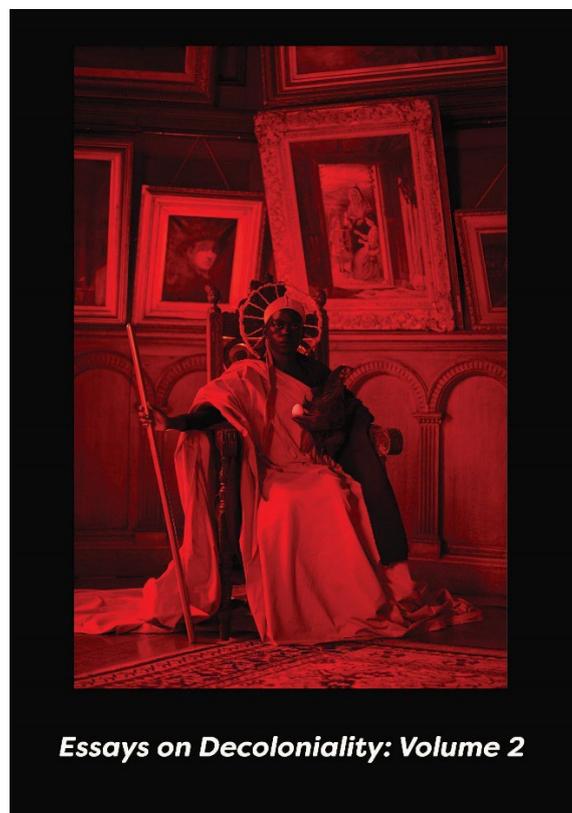
Featuring papers on the University of Edinburgh's links to the Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies, the journeys of colonial materials such as ebony and ivory in eighteenth-century Scottish musical instruments, and contemporary linguistic activism in the Sámi community.

Due for publication in early 2025.

IASH Occasional Papers

1. *Europe Redefined*. Richard McAllister. 1991.
   ISBN 0 9514854 1 5.

2. *Europe: Ways Forward*. Mark Russell and Richard McAllister. 1992.
   ISBN 0 9514854 2 3.

3. *Constitutions* and *Indigenous Peoples*. Ninian Stephen and Paul Reeves. 1993.
   ISBN 0 9514854 3 1.

4. *Indigenous Peoples & Ethnic Minorities*. Peter Jones. 1993.
   ISBN 0 9514854 4 X.

5. *Educational Values*. Peter Jones. 1994.
   ISBN 0 9514854 5 8.

6. *Family Values in the Mediterranean*. Peter Jones. 1994.
   ISBN 0 9514854 6 6.

7. *Post-Communist Transition: Realities and Perspectives*. Ivan Antonovich. 1996.
   ISBN 0 9514854 7 4.

8. *Value, Values and the British Army*. Patrick Mileham. 1996.
   ISBN 0 9514854 8 2.

9. *Commonwealth Lectures*. Peter Jones (ed.). 1997.
   ISBN 0 9514854 9 0.

10. *Darwin's Voyage: Circumnavigation, World History and the Sublime*. Ian Duncan. 2009.
    ISBN 978 0 9532713 4 4.

11. *Darwin in Scotland*. David Fergusson. 2009.
    ISBN 978 0 9532713 5 1.

12. *Charles Darwin: Some Scottish Connections*. Walter M. Stephen. 2009.
    ISBN 978 0 9532713 6 8.

13. *Edinburgh, Enlightenment and Darwin's Expression of the Emotions*. Gregory Radick. 2009.
    ISBN 978 0 9532713 7 5.

14. *Evolving Creation*. John Polkinghorne. 2009.
    ISBN 978 0 9532713 8 2.

15.   *Conversation: and the Reception of David Hume*. Peter Jones. 2011.
        ISBN 978 0 9532713 9 9.

16.   *Gathering Uncertainties: A Conversation Between Playwright Linda McLean and Susan Manning*. 2011.
        ISBN 978 0 9568610 0 9.

17.   *Hume and Searle: the 'Is/Ought' Gap versus Speech Act Theory*. Daniel Schulthess. 2011.
        ISBN 978 0 9568610 1 6.

18.   *Hume's Intellectual Development: an Overview*. James Harris. 2011.
        ISBN 978 0 9568610 2 3.

19.   *Reason, Induction and Causation in Hume's Philosophy*. Don Garrett and Peter Millican, 2011.
        ISBN 978 0 9568610 3 0.

20.   *The Enlightened Virago: Princess Dashkova through the Eyes of Others* and *Princess Dashkova, the Woman Who Shook the World*. Georgina Barker (ed.). 2019.
        ISBN 0 9532713 0 6.

21.   *Humanities of the Future: Perspectives from the Past and Present*. Ben Fletcher-Watson & Jana Phillips (eds.), 2020.
        ISBN 0 9532713 1 3.

22.   *The White Canvas: An Exhibition Catalogue*. Shatha Altowai, 2021.
        ISBN 0 9532713 2 0.

23.   *Emerging Canon, Contested Histories: Global Art Historians in Conversation*. Francesco Gusella and Meha Priyadarshini (eds.), 2021.
        ISBN 0 9532713 3 7.

24.   *R|D: Articulation and Representational Divergence*. Victor Peterson II, 2022.
        ISBN 0 9568610 4 7.

25.   *Our Time Is A Garden: new nature writing by women and nonbinary writers of colour*. Alycia Pirmohamed (ed.), 2022.
        ISBN 0 9568610 5 4.

26.   *Enduring Violence in America: Two Essays*. Theodore Louis Trost, 2023.
        ISBN 978 0 9568610 6 1.

To order free copies, please contact:

The Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh, Hope Park Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9NW, Scotland. Email: iash@ed.ac.uk Web: www.iash.ed.ac.uk