Editorial

Claire Chambers

In our last editorial (Chambers and Gilmour, 2016), we discussed movements originating in South African higher education, #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall. Similarly, in the United States and beyond, Black Lives Matter is gathering momentum. Emerging in response to the lack of justice for the 2012 murder of Trayvon Martin, the movement combats systematic racism and discrimination as well as police killings of black people. There has been a vicious backlash against the group around the slogan "All Lives Matter", whose participants attempt to paint Black Lives Matter as violent Marxists. This July Patricia Leary, a professor at Whittier Law School, wrote an incisive rejoinder to a student letter criticizing her decision to wear a Black Lives Matter t-shirt on campus (Jaschik, 2016: n.p.). In this reply, Leary dismantles several premises inherent in the students' political attack on her sartorial choice. Perhaps her most searing rebuttal addresses their implicit assumption that the slogan "Black Lives Matter" is preceded by a silent "only":

> There *are* some implicit words that precede "Black Lives Matter," and they go something like this:
>
> > Because of the brutalizing and killing of black people at the hands of the police and the indifference of society in general and the criminal justice system in particular, it is important that we say that...
>
> This is, of course, far too long to fit on a shirt. (Leary, 2016: n.p.)

Moving from questions around decolonizing the curriculum and higher education that are central to the South African protests and to the deployment of Black Lives Matter in US universities, I now want more broadly to consider the university as a site of struggle. In India,

Narendra Modi's Hindutva (or Hindu Right) Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has taken an increasingly vicious stance towards artists, intellectuals, dissenters, and minorities.[1] The killing of activists and writers Govind Pansare and Professor M. M. Kalburgi in 2015 led to many authors returning awards in protest. There was a rally in New Delhi on 20 July 2016 as part of a campaign for an investigation into these murders, as well as that of writer Narendra Dabholkar in 2013.

The impact of the BJP's stance in education and the arts has been catastrophic. At the Indian Institute of Technology in Chennai, a Dalit group the Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle was banned in May 2015. Soon afterwards, the Film and TV Institute of India had its governing council stuffed with what Salman Rushdie calls "Modi's Toadies" (2014: n.p.). At the University of Hyderabad earlier this year a Dalit PhD student, Rohith Vemula, took his life. Vemula had been stripped of his stipend as punishment because he had shown a subversive documentary and demonstrated against governmental reprisals for the 1993 Mumbai bombings. In his eloquent suicide note, this persecuted man lamented that "[n]ever was a man treated as a mind" (Vajpeyi, 2016: n.p.). Facing international outrage, the BJP took pains to assert that Vemula was no Dalit and thus his death was not a "caste issue" but a personal tragedy.

Finally, the BJP came after Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), with its proud tradition of both radical and liberal scholarship. The Toadies first painted this work as Naxalite communism, then as anti-national or terrorist writing. In February 2016, some JNU students held a meeting to mark the third anniversary of the death penalty meted out to Mohammad Afzal Guru, one of three Kashmiris accused of the 2001 Indian Parliament attacks. For doing so, several of them including Students Union president Kanhaiya Kumar were arrested and, in an extraordinary incident, beaten by men dressed as lawyers outside the courtrooms. Priyamvada Gopal and Romila Thapar, *inter alia*, compare the current situation to Mrs Gandhi's dictatorial mid-1970s Emergency (Gopal, 2016; Thapar, 2016). Arundhati Roy writes of the BJP's "instinctive hostility towards intellectual activity" (2016: n.p.). I would suggest that this anti-

intellectualism bears comparison with Donald Trump's idiocies in the United States, and Brexiteer Michael Gove's declaration that British people "have had enough of experts" (qtd. in Deacon, 2016: n.p.). Gopal, Thapar, and Roy are alert to the BJP's flinging around of the terms "anti-national" and "sedition" to stifle critique. This use of the anti-India charge is reminiscent of 1950s McCarthyism, or the way the Blasphemy Laws are used to settle vendettas in present-day Pakistan. At the time of writing, crackdowns are continuing on the campuses of JNU and the University of Hyderabad.

This time of tension and uncertainty for universities seems an appropriate moment to reflect on global higher education. In July 2016, a group of scholars did exactly that in a Northern Postcolonial Network meeting at Leeds Beckett University. There, I was one of the participants in an academic roundtable, alongside co-organizer Emily Marshall (Leeds Beckett), as well as Sarah Lawson Welsh (York St John) and Kate Houlden (Anglia Ruskin). In my presentation I argued that education needs to decolonize rather than just diversify. Taking our cue from Critical Race Theory and Critical Race Feminism (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 2003/1997; Essed, 1991), we should recognize that racism is not an aberration but pervades every aspect of society. We are all implicated in it and need to be critically self-reflexive, looking to challenge systematic inequality rather than individualistically seeking to prove that our teaching is somehow "colour blind". Education is a part of the problem but it can also spearhead the solution.

I will come on to the curriculum shortly, inspired by the Why Is My Curriculum White movement. However, first I want to take on another important question raised by Lucinda Newns among others, namely, "why isn't my professor black"? In her article, "Speaking for Others: Tensions in Post-colonial Studies", Newns claims that English is one of the most "whitewashed" disciplines (2014a: n.p.), and that postcolonial literary studies has not accommodated non-white academics in the same way that African American literature has made great strides for US academe. It is important to reflect on this discomforting fact. Appalling

recent statistics have demonstrated the low proportion of Black or Minority Ethnic professors in British higher education; this was put at less than two per cent in 2013, according to Deborah Gabriel. The statistics indicate that the five-decade-long rise of first Commonwealth literature and then postcolonial studies has done little to alter the ethnic makeup of university research and teaching staff.

In relation to university recruitment, racism and unconscious bias clearly comes into play (Sullivan, 2006; Stainback, 2009), with many positions being filled by "people like us". Relatedly, Frank Tuitt and Fred A. Bonner II argue that even when black scholars make it through the door of universities in the United States, "an unwelcoming and potentially hostile campus environment awaits those who choose to teach in predominantly White institutions" (2015: 1). Nor is the student body much more diverse than the professoriate. In 2007, the Runnymede Trust found that there were more students of Caribbean origin at London Met, where Newns completed her doctoral thesis (Newns, 2014b), than in the whole of the Russell Group put together. In 2012, the Runnymede Trust found that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students comprised 23 per cent of the UK university population in 2008–9, a rise of ten per cent in 14 years. Despite this welcome rise, a substantially higher proportion of these BME undergraduates attended less prestigious, financially hard-pressed post-1992 universities than the white population.

In terms of my own approach to convening and teaching postcolonial literature modules, which I was asked to speak about at Leeds Beckett, what informs my decision to choose specific texts and contexts is, firstly, author diversity: I look for a mix of genders, sexuality, region, religion, ethnic backgrounds, age, and so forth. Secondly, a key priority is to include a range of genres and try to cover the novel, short story, narrative non-fiction, theatre, poetry, and film. There is also a strong element of pragmatism: texts have to be in print and affordable for students from different backgrounds. In relation to knowledge, I would be chary about teaching a text or context I didn't know about or wasn't prepared to read up on.

I also look for coverage of particular topics. To take a single case study, one of the issues I choose to discuss with students is how writing in the digital environment encourages new attitudes to authorship. Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, for instance, began blogging as the character, Ifemelu, from her last novel, *Americanah* (Adichie, 2013 and 2014). In the novel, Ifemelu first joins online chat forums celebrating natural hair, and goes on to write a blog entitled "*Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*" (2013: 4). As her blog becomes increasingly successful, she is invited to participate in "diversity workshops, or multicultural talks" in the United States (2013: 305), where she is expected to shear her cyberspace writing of its radical anti-racist political content. Alongside this fiction, Adichie's blog, *The Small Redemptions of Lagos* (2014: n.p.), allows her to furnish readers with vignettes about Ifemelu's and Obinze's relationship after the reigniting of their love affair with which *Americanah* closes. She also discusses topical news items concerning Nigeria, such as the abduction of school girls that led to the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. Taken together, the novel and blog richly teach students about the postcolonial digital humanities (see, for example, Philip, Irani, and Dourish, 2012; Risam, 2015), and about how cyberspace troubles boundaries between nations, different ethnic groups, and fixed authorial identities (see Chambers and Watkins, 2015: 262).

To conclude this section, I feel strongly that postcolonial perspectives should form far more of a central part of degree courses, instead of being taught as a separate literary silo. Mutual rather than unidirectional transformation should come out of postcolonial, world, or global literatures. Postcolonial and mainstream literature shouldn't just cosily coexist alongside each other, sharing common themes. In other words, a sense of change and development to the English literature core and not just its "margins" is paramount.

Rachael Gilmour

This Editorial prefaces another very full issue of *JCL*, with 11 articles by rising and established scholars from around the world. In these papers, questions of textuality and form — in genres as diverse as poetry, travel writing, poetry, novels, memoir, political satire, philosophy, and the bureaucratic discourses of the neoliberal state — intersect with a pervasive attention to the historical and political.

In the first article, "'India, for the plain hell of it': G. V. Desani's *The Indian Journal* (1951−1958)", Ruksana Abdul-Majid explores the vision of India found in G. V. Desani's unpublished travelogue, *The Indian Journal*, held in the archives at the Harry Ransom Centre. Via previously unexamined archival material, and through the lens of Mary Louise Pratt's "autoethnographic expression" (Pratt, 1992: 7), Abdul-Majid explores Desani's fraught restaging of European colonial narratives of travel and exploration in India. She also opens out the critical conversation on his work in new directions, beyond his celebrated modernist novel *All About H. Hatterr*.

Extending the postcolonial ecocritical concerns that shaped our most recent special issue, *Postcolonial Environments* (*JCL* 51.2) edited by Veronica Barnsley, Jade Munslow Ong, and Matthew Whittle (2016), the next two articles offer powerful literary challenges to anthropocentrism, and a call to imagine new forms of environmental and social connectivity and justice. J. Brooks Bouson addresses deep ecology and environmental catastrophe in her article "A 'Joke-Filled Romp' Through End Times: Radical Environmentalism, Deep Ecology, and Human Extinction in Margaret Atwood's Eco-apocalyptic *MaddAddam* Trilogy". Here she shows how Atwood, in *MaddAddam,* moves forward from *The Year of the Flood* and *Oryx and Crake* as she retells and reconsiders her dystopian eco-apocalyptic account of what leads up to and follows mass human extinction. As Atwood offers a horrific and darkly satiric account of the gruesome final days of humanity in the twenty-first century, she engages her readers in an unsettling thought experiment as Crake's genetically modified hominoids, which are presented in *Oryx and Crake* as a kind of mad scientist joke, become in *MaddAddam* the best hope for the genetic

survival of some vestige of homo sapiens in the future Craker-human hybrid. Returning to India, and turning to poetry, Sayantan Chakraborty's "Naga Pastoral?: The Post-pastoral Possibilities in Temsula Ao's Hill-Poems" examines the cultural landscape of Indian's Naga hills through a contemporary environmentalist lens. Chakraborty discusses the regional ontology or "topolectics" of Ao's "hill-poems" and the complex networks of connection they trace, through time and space, and between human and non-human nature, in the Ao-Naga community. Moving dialectically between pastoral and anti-pastoral, Ao's poems are read as offering a critical model for a "post-pastoral ecopoetics" (2016: XXX).

From postcolonial environmentalism, we turn to histories of global politics and global conflict. Oliver Coates' "Narrative, Time, and the Archive in an African Second World War Memoir: Isaac Fadoyebo's *A Stroke of Unbelievable Luck*" argues for a new reading of Fadoyebo's memoir. It was previously well-known as an account of an African soldier's military service in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, India, and Burma. Now Coates calls for the book to be interpreted not as mere historical source material, but as a complex work of narrative construction. In this life writing, Fadoyebo mediates experience of war — intimately affective, and at the same time played out on a global scale — through its philosophical, spiritual, and mystical dimensions. Turning to mid-nineteenth century Nova Scotia with a similarly local/global scale in mind, Oana Godeanu-Kenworthy in "'A Great Caravansary Filled with Strangers': American Popular Democracy in T. C. Haliburton's Political Satire" examines political satirist T C Haliburton. As Godeanu-Kenworthy contends, Haliburton's popular early nineteenth-century Sam Slick sketches, with their charismatic Yankee protagonist, framed a close engagement with global political affairs. This manifested itself in scepticism about American-style elective institutions, and in a commitment to persuading colonial readers that Nova Scotia's best interests were served within the British Empire.

The next three articles turn, from different angles, to metropolitan settings and structures of power. In "'Fragmenting and Becoming Double': Supplementary Twins and Abject Bodies in

Helen Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girl*", Sarah Ilott and Chloe Buckley challenge critical trends that promise a positively transformed postcolonial identity through the postcolonial Bildungsroman, through Oyeyemi's coming-of-age metropolitan gothic novel. Bringing together Kristeva's theory of the abject and Derrida's theory of the supplement, Ilott and Buckley focus on how experiences of racism and marginalization in *The Icarus Girl* contribute to a sense of the fragmented subject. Staying with the question of how subjectivities are formed discursively, in "Bureaucracy and Narrative Possibilities in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*", Emily Johansen explores how Ishiguro's novel exposes the depersonalizing power of bureaucratic regulation to structure interpersonal interaction in the neoliberal state. Next, Jaya Madhvani turns to the London of the present in "The Representation of London in Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret*: Home, Neighbourhood, Travel". Shukri's important 2005 novel shuttles between South Africa's Western Cape in the last years of apartheid, and the London of the early 2000s. Focusing centrally both on the London of the novel and the contemporary city itself, Madhvani considers how Shukri meditates on the politics of urban space and place as they are experienced by the city's ethnic minority communities.

From London, then, to New Zealand, where Erin Mercer's "Sylvia Ashton-Warner's 'Strange Cadences': Rereading *Spinster* and *Incense to Idols*" invites a reassessment of Ashton-Warner's work. Long neglected as an aberration from masculinist realist models of post-Second World War New Zealand fiction, Ashton-Warner's divisiveness has also prevented her from being taken up in more recent, recuperative feminist criticism. Yet Mercer's illuminating readings of her two most popular novels, in relation to conventions of popular postwar female fiction, work both to reassert the importance of Ashton-Warner's writing and to reveal some of the contradictions and fissures in prevailing critical visions of mid-twentieth-century femininity.

A similar spirit of critical reassessment permeates "The Fatwa and the Philosophe: Rushdie, Voltaire, and Islam", in which Adam Perchard skewers the manner in which unhistorical ideas about "the Enlightenment" have become central to contemporary

constructions of the apparent gulf between "Islam" and "the West". These notions about the Age of Reason have been propounded especially loudly by Salman Rushdie since the publication of *The Satanic Verses* and the fatwa against it issued by the Ayatollah Khomeini. Focusing on Rushdie's self-invention as "the new Voltaire", Perchard opens up new avenues through which to address Rushdie's writing on Islam. This virtuosic emerging scholar works transhistorically to draw connections between Voltaire's and Rushdie's use of the figure of the Islamic despot in their respective critiques of their cultural scenes.

Finally, as this issue is going to press, the popular #ThisFlag movement in Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwean diaspora is making an unprecedented challenge — through social media campaigns, rolling shutdowns, and demonstrations in Zimbabwe and around the world — to the power of Robert Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF party. Thus it seems particularly timely that this issue concludes with Cuthbeth Tagwirei and Leon de Kock's "From 'Bush' to 'Farm': Emplacement and Displacement in Contemporary White Zimbabwean Narratives". Through readings of two recent novels, Peter Rimmer's *Cry of the Fish Eagle* and Douglas Rogers' *The Last Resort*, one pre- and one post-Mugabe's farm seizures, Tagwirei and de Kock trace how the "bush" and the "farm" serve as spaces for the imagining of white belonging at different political moments in the Zimbabwean nation-state.

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