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Decolonising the University has a striking book cover, featuring an imagined Cecil Rhodes statue amputated above the ankles with graffiti stating “Decolonising the University” on the pedestal of the statue. The tome features contributions by 20 authors (including the three co-editors). In order to appreciate the battle cry of *Decolonising the University*, it is useful to clarify the concept of colonialism. In their introductory chapter, Bhambra (a Professor of Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies at the University of Sussex), Gebrial (a PhD student at the London School of Economics) and Nişancıoğlu (a Lecturer in International Relations at SOAS) employ a broad definition of colonialism which is not restricted to ‘settler colonialism’ (for instance, in the Americas), but also includes commercial imperialism, the slave trade, “financialised neo-colonialism” and Orientalism (5). Universities played an important role in various colonial projects by, amongst many other things, developing racist theories and educating future colonial administrators. In the words of the editors:

“European forms of knowledge were spread, local indigenous knowledge suppressed, and native informants trained... In both colony and metropole, universities were founded and financed through the spoils of colonial plunder, enslavement and dispossession” (5).

A critical reflection on the problematic colonial history of universities leads the editorial team and contributors to question the epistemological authority of Western universities. Is university knowledge largely governed ‘by the West for the West’? And what does decolonisation mean in the contexts of the university and society-at-large? Decolonisation goes beyond putting previously colonised people into positions of the colonisers, it “includes the revaluation of political, social, economic and judicial structures... and the development... of new structures” (Laenui, cited in 180). The volume is organised in three parts: historical and disciplinary contexts, institutional initiatives and decolonial reflections.

The insightful second chapter by co-editor Dalia Gabriel kicks off the section on Contexts and, in a historically-informed way, discusses the protest movement around

‘Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford’. The controversial student movement (that had its origins in early 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa, and that led to the swift removal of Rhodes’ statue at the University of Cape Town) viewed Cecil Rhodes as being responsible for the legislative foundations of the horrific South African apartheid regime. The Rhodes statue at Oriel College in Oxford was erected in 1911 at Rhodes’ own behest, and opponents of the statue argued that Rhodes’ generous endowment (that was linked to his statue) was enabled by a history of violence – more specifically, by the colonial exploitation of South Africa’s black population. Whether or not one endorses the removal of Rhodes’ statues at various universities, the movement failed in their demand at Oriel, and it has been argued that once you start ‘rewriting history’, there may not be too many statues left standing. It seems more important that the Rhodes Must Fall rallying cry had broader objectives such as a better representation of non-white cultures in curricula as well as combating racial discrimination and insensitivity – crucial goals that one could hopefully more easily agree upon.



Illustration 1: Statue of Rhodes by Marion Walgate at the University of Cape Town. Unveiled in 1934 and removed in 2015. Photograph by Danie van der Merwe. Public domain.

In chapter 3, *Race and the Neoliberal University*, John Holmwood (a Sociology Professor at the University of Nottingham) reminds us of the colonial history of U.K. and U.S. universities. In the U.S., for instance, many of the private colleges were “formed from endowments from wealth derived from plantation slavery” and the ‘land grant’ universities were built on land from which native Americans had been dispossessed (39). A call to decolonise the university is framed within a call for social justice in education, and a more democratic university and society are favoured vis-à-vis the purportedly race-blind ‘neoliberal university’. The short chapter 4, titled “Black / Academia”, by Robbie Shilliam (Professor of International Relations at Queen Mary University of London) argues that the racialisation of public culture (the white, competent ‘knower’, versus the non-white, incompetent ‘known’) has been ‘institutionalised’ in the *hidden curriculum* (a term popularised by educational reformers such as Freire and Illich). However, the process of decolonising the university has already started to deepen academic rigour and to lead to the creation of new knowledge, “despite and besides the racism of the academy” (60).

The multi-authored chapter 5 on *Decolonising Philosophy* is the final section of the book’s first part and provides a specific disciplinary context of decolonising the university. Maldonado-Torres and co-authors (who largely work at Rutgers University) state that philosophy continues to be a “bastion of Eurocentrism” and “whiteness” (64). An ongoing process of decolonising philosophy (that makes some interesting references to Asian and Latin American philosophers that certainly sound worthwhile further exploration) would mean the critical examination of dominant presuppositions of basic concepts – including, but not limited to, modernity, coloniality, race and gender – “in the search for a decolonial and post-continental mode of thinking, philosophy and critique” (66).

Chapter 6 is the first in the second part of the book on institutional initiatives. Aparna and Kramsch (Radboud Universiteit, Holland) reflect on Asylum University – an intriguing project with asylum-seekers, undocumented refugees, academics, students, activists and volunteers close to the Dutch-German border – and, along the way, develop an ‘asylum university lens’ that is very much aware of the instability of borders. Chapter 7 by Icaza and Vázquez (from Erasmus University of Rotterdam, and University College Roosevelt, respectively) in their title ask the question: “Diversity or Decolonisation?” They reflect upon their experience with the University of Amsterdam’s ‘Diversity Commission’ and identify three core processes of decolonising the university: pedagogies of positionality (contesting universal validity claims of a monocultural, Eurocentric, approach, and listening to the plurality of knowledges), relationality (more democratic and participatory learning and teaching practices), and transitionality (the social and environmental embeddedness of knowledge).

A radical and thought-provoking piece by Kehine Andrews forms chapter 8 and recounts the formation of the first Black Studies programme in Europe at Birmingham City University (where the author is Associate Professor of Sociology). There is a paucity of Black staff at UK universities,

although especially at post-1992 universities (such as BCU), half of the students may well belong to ethnic minorities. In some highly controversial statements, Andrews equates the very concept of the university with racism and “the master’s house” and regards it as “a dangerous myth” to conceptualise the “university as the incubator of progressive and critical thought” (138). He highlights the importance of African perspectives in decolonising the university.

One of my favourite pieces in the collection is chapter 9 by Pat Lockley, an academic technologist, on open initiatives for decolonising the curriculum. Lockley critically discusses the key concept of ‘open-ness’ in which I, as the humble editor of a fledgling open-access journal, am naturally very interested in. Lockley quite convincingly argues that Massive Open Online Courses, for instance, are not quite as open as they may appear to be, with an overwhelming majority of MOOC participants already having a degree or higher, and participants from certain countries (like North Korea) being excluded from many MOOCs. Moreover, much of the MOOC content is produced in Western countries (this is also the case for Open Educational Resources, with 89% coming from Europe and North America). Lockley also discusses open-access (OA) journals and has some data that deserve reflection, for example, that only six percent of OA journals are in Africa (with 91% of these being Egyptian)! I was particularly taken aback that “in the UK, 81 percent of journals charge a processing fee” to contributors (150).

Shauneen Pete’s chapter 10, titled “Meschakanis, a Coyote Narrative: Decolonising Higher Education”, is the opening chapter of the final part of the volume, titled *Decolonial Reflections*. The author is a native American and former Professor who recently opened a restaurant in a First Nation community in Canada. This is an unusual and intriguing piece in which storytelling is employed as a ‘decolonising strategy’ and a trickster figure (“Coyote”) is engaged in a reflexive dialogue. Carol Azumah Dennis (Open University) in chapter 11 proposes an intervention, based on a ‘counter-hegemonic’ Ubuntu pedagogy – Ubuntu is an African cosmology celebrating the oneness of humans – that is centred on multiplicity and that recognises “different forms of understanding, knowing, experiencing and explaining the world” (9). The four Rs of an Ubuntu curriculum are relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation and rights and regulation.

Chapter 12 is by Angela Last (Leicester University) who critically discusses the internationalisation of British universities. She views internationalisation strategies of university managements (both in terms of curricular diversification and market expansion) as a decolonial activist’s “unexpected ally” (213). The book’s final chapter is by William Jamal Richardson (a PhD candidate at Northwestern University) who discusses concepts such as ‘undone science’ (non-produced knowledge) or ‘negative knowledge’ (unknown knowledge deemed insignificant or dangerous) in the context of Eurocentrism in the discipline of Sociology. In his excellent contribution, Richardson refers to Syed Farid Alatas’ theory of academic dependency as a form of neocolonialism. Academically, the global South is dependent on the global North in four major ways: “(1) dependence on ideas and the media of ideas; (2) dependence

on the technology of education; (3) dependence on aid for research as well as technology; (4) dependence on investment in education" (240). Instead of having more publishers and journals of their own, scholars in the global South continue to largely consume publications from the global North and also model their own writing, and select topics, according to preferences found in the global North.

Decolonising the University is a collection of rather diverse and always thought-provoking contributions that should make everybody who cares about the future of higher education pause and think. I read the book while on a flight from Athens to Singapore and being stranded at Istanbul Airport due to a major flight delay in the middle of the night. I cannot be sure how much the sleep-deprived circumstances of my reading influenced the intensity of my reception, but I certainly felt the need to do my part in further diversifying JALT's editorial board (an ongoing process), and the book made me also reflect on my own 'whiteness', being a well-

treated minority 'other' in Chinese-majority Singapore. As Singapore's GDP per capita is higher than Germany's (and one of the richest countries in the world, with the largest number of millionaires on a per capita basis), it does not quite feel like somebody from the global North working in the global South. However, *Decolonising the University*, amongst quite a few other things, shows the importance of 'race' (a term that has always made me shudder because of the atrocities associated with the concept committed by the Nazis and that I thus have refused to use), and I certainly get the importance of seeing myself as 'racialised' through the eyes of others, including those of my students. Some readers could be put off by some of the left-wing political stances by various contributors and also the publisher, Pluto Press, but irrespective of our own political persuasion, perhaps this is the time for some easily-exoticised Ubuntu pedagogy that reminds us of the oneness of all humans. *Decolonising the University* is a very well-researched and highly readable book that I feel compelled to highly recommend.