

## EDITORS' NOTE

As I write this editorial I am starkly aware of the mutated connotations which the word 'precarity', on which this issue of *Postcolonial Intervention* focuses, has acquired in the context of the growing COVID-19 pandemic which has already killed so many thousands of people across the world. The global and pervasive impact of this disease has meant that irrespective of class, caste, gender, race or even the divides of Global North and Global South, human life itself has suddenly become unpredictably precarious. What makes things even more complicated is the fact that the impact of the pandemic is not confined to the realm of medical science and attendant institutional management alone. Various countries have had to impose strict lockdowns in order to combat the growth of the virus, resulting in major downturn in economic activities which has obviously adversely affected the lives of millions of people, especially those belonging to the precariat who have suddenly lost their livelihoods and have had to contend with the cruel dilemma of choosing between death by hunger or death by coronavirus. India itself has been the scene of many such episodes of an unmitigated tragedy where migrant labourers have either been sprayed with pesticides as if they were animals, or have been run over while walking miles and miles to return to their villages or have simply died en route due to either starvation or exhaustion. On one particularly gruesome occasion, some labourers

who had fallen asleep on a railway track, were run over by a freight train at night. And all this has been going on in a country which has also sent several special flights to countries around the world to safely bring back NRIs and their pets. Clearly even a pandemic does not erase our differences but often serves to reinforce entrenched hierarchies of one kind or another. This is also why African-Americans and Latinos in the United States have a disproportionately higher fatality rate, testifying to not just entrenched racism but also unequal access to health-care and financial resources necessary for securing proper treatment conditioned by racial hierarchies.

Of course, when it comes to the issue of race in the United States one must recall the assassination of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and many others like them who have fallen victim to a hostile shroud of racist hatred which stems from the United States' own history of slavery, segregation and the failure to address the structures of systemic inequality and violence which such a history has fostered. Significantly, the countless episodes of protest and dissent generated by recent happenings, have also witnessed a remarkable surge in anti-racist, progressive, pluralist activism across the United States and Europe which have related recent violence with the history of colonial atrocities and have tried to recognise the reality of the past. It is perhaps in such activism that one can find those saplings of postcolonial/de-colonial hope which might re-shape the world once it begins to limp to normalcy after eventually overcoming the pandemic.

The papers in this issue reflect both an acknowledgment of the multidimensional precarity in which many are entangled as well as the possibility of a world beyond such miseries. The issue begins with a featured article by Professor Cecile Sandten, revolving around an analysis of Chris Cleave's novel *Little Bee* which interweaves issues of migration, institutional deprivations, language and violence. In the light of the revelations associated with the Windrush Scandal, such analysis gains even greater relevance and performs that cautionary role which post-colonial criticism often adopts. Sandten's exploration of the precariat consciousness is continued in the next paper by Arikam Chatterjee and Arzoo Saha which locates precarity within circuits of neo-liberal capitalism and tries to analyse how such precarity finds reflection through various forms of Indian rap music. This is followed by Gorica Majstorovic's exploration of the migrant as precariat, particularly in the context of Africans trying desperately to cross into Europe through various illegal routes that are marked by myriad physical and institutional dangers, even as they seek refuge from diverse conflicts which are often generated by the currents of global economic forces. The final paper of this focal section on 'precarity' is Paul Veyret's analysis of Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* and Mohammad Hanif's *Red Birds* which explore precarity by combining Judith Butler's notion of 'grievability' with Thomas Nail's idea of 'kinopolitics'.

Mohsin Hamid, in fact, operates as a link between the two sections of this issue as the first paper of the General Section, by Samar H. Aljahdali, focuses on *Exit West*

and Raja Shehadeh's *A Rift in Time: Travels with my Ottoman Uncle*, to explore issues of belonging and bordering, but from a different perspective. Similar underlying concerns are again explored from a much more intricately intertextual perspective by Catherine Brown-Robison as she reads comparatively Joyce and Walcott's re-writings of the Homeric texts, with special focus on homecoming. The next paper again shifts back to Africa as Lava Asaad foregrounds the paradigm of Islamic Environmentalism to offer a reading of Ibrahim Al-Koni's *The Bleeding of the Stone*. A very different aspect of African culture appears in the next paper where Peter Omoko analyses the aesthetic considerations behind the Ojọjọ festival of the Igbudu people as part of a critical challenge against Eurocentric disparaging of orature and attendant degradation of pre-colonial cultural norms. The next paper again takes us across the Atlantic and documents the dangerous consequences of growing Evangelic influence in Brazil and its nexus with neo-colonial networks of power. The issue concludes with a review of Matthew Shum's monograph on Scottish author Thomas Pringle.

All these papers collectively embody postcolonialism's commitment to an emancipatory and pluralistic worldview where dissent must thwart exploitation, memory must combat erasure, diversity must negate compulsory homogeneity and solidarity and hope must overcome precarity. We know how impossible this sounds. Yet, what can scholars do but read, write, teach and hope? Through this journal and the thoughts it awakens, let us continue to do all that, together.