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Editor's note

On 23 May 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was reelected in India with the largest democratic majority in decades. The victory made him the first Indian prime minister in nearly half a century to win and hold parliamentary majorities in consecutive elections. Frequently likened to Donald Trump, Modi campaigns and rules on a populist ticket. He has emboldened extreme Hindu nationalists bent on "purifying" India of its Muslim population: mob lynchings, gang beatings, and other often fatal hate crimes are now commonplace, both in rural and urban provinces. Mosques are razed and new Hindu temples are built in their place; Bangladeshi and Rohingya Muslims fleeing persecution are subject to hardening borders and indiscriminate deportations; the violent ostracisation of Dalit communities is entrenched by budget cuts and political rhetoric. The militarisation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir continues, its devolved authority seized by Delhi in the name of a "united India" in August 2019 with a view to the territory's Hinduisation. Many have argued that this act in particular threatens not only the existence of Kashmir, but the integrity of Indian democracy itself. Meanwhile Modi continues to flirt war with Pakistan, strengthen ties to Trump's America, and threaten academics, writers and activists with censorship and imprisonment.

At this frightening moment, it seems especially crucial that essayist, activist and novelist, Arundhati Roy, was welcomed as a keynote speaker at the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS) Triennial Conference, held in July 2019 at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. Since its inception at the University of Leeds in 1964, ACLALS has been integral to the history and study of postcolonial literature and writing, forging cross-national communities of scholars and authors from Australia to Canada, Sri Lanka to Tanzania, South Africa to Nigeria, and many countries in between. That some of the organisation's national chapters this year began questioning the use of the word 'Commonwealth' in the organisation's title—proposing tentative plans to swap it t for alternatives such as 'postcolonial'—is indicative of a critical scrutiny in which the old metropoles are continually decentred, geographical imaginaries disorientated, settler colonies unsettled, and intercontinental configurations rewired.

Whether described as 'Commonwealth'—a word undergoing a nostalgic revival in the UK among pro-Brexit commentators—or 'postcolonial'—a word currently subject to refreshed criticism from indigenous movements still campaigning for sovereignty recognition—India remains central to the field. Postcolonial writing, along with the cross-national movements and networks that constitute it, could not exist in its current form without the input and impact of the subcontinent's vibrant literary cultures. Arundhati Roy's harrowing keynote discussion at the ACLALS Triennial of the present dangers of being an activist, novelist and essayist, in what she readily described as Modi's 'fascist' India, serves as an urgent reminder of the multiform politics of postcolonial writing—many aspects of which are addressed in the articles included in this issue. Indeed, when taken together the essays included here point to a politics of solidarity that, like ACLALS, builds between as well as within borders, cutting across various intersections of group and individual identities by supporting continued efforts to write toward a postcolonial world.

Inspired by Roy's example, this issue begins with three articles that address directly the postcolonial politics of the Indian subcontinent. First, Jennifer Dubrow's "The aesthetics of the fragment: Progressivism and literary modernism in the work of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association" is a compelling example of the kinds of reevaluation of hegemonic literary histories that have long been a central focus of postcolonial critique. Reading the work

of a number of writers connected with the All-India Progressive Writers' Association from the 1930s and '40s, Dubrow argues against Urdu modernism as an inherited, postcolonial phenomenon, to demonstrate instead how its practitioners mobilised the aesthetics of the fragment to interrogate independence and Partition as a crisis of South Asian nationhood—the consequences of which are, after all, frighteningly current in Modi's India. Building on these themes, Hakyoung Ahn's "Queer eyes and gendered violence in Bapsi Sidwha's *Cracking India*" rereads Sidwha's iconic Partition novel for the cross-class solidarities its constructs against male sexual violence. In so doing, Ahn's retrieval of templates for queer solidarities again presents itself as an urgent political project in the context of India's current administration. Then similarly, in the issue's third article, "The sentimental nightmare: The discourse of the scientific and the aesthetic in Rokeya S. Hossain's 'Sultana's Dream'", Atanu Bhattacharya and Preet Hiradhar read Hossain's speculative short story in the context of early Bengali science fiction writing, honing in on its resistance to the "progressive" rhetoric of colonial science and drawing out its much-needed model for feminist utopia.

The issue then shifts geographically to Maurice Elbileeni's "Breaking the Script: The generational conjuncture in the anglophone Palestinian novel", correcting the worrying omission of Palestine from postcolonial criticism that, although increasingly highlighted by a number of scholars, still continues. With readings of Susan Abulhawa and Susan Muaddi Darraj's anglophone novels, Elbileeni shows how contemporary Palestinian writing is complicated by the English language's association with past empires and current superpowers, on the one hand reinforcing the conventional task of narrating the nation, while on the other generating a new cosmopolitan, and markedly inter-generational, Palestinian narrative. This refreshing take on cosmopolitan ethics—to which postcolonial writing has long been drawn—is then taken up by Peter D. Matthews in his article, "Tim Winton and the ethics of the neighbour here and now". With close readings of Australian writer Tim Winton's *Cloudstreet* (1991) and his more recent novel *Eyrie* (2013), and drawing on critiques of Winton by indigenous author Melissa Lucashenko (another keynote speaker at this year's ACLALS Triennial), Matthews develops an ethics of neighbourliness that "rests not just in the spectral remains of the past, but in the living urgency of the present moment".

The issue thus returns to the insistence on the politics of postcolonial writing as a much-needed reparative force in our current moment. Continuing this theme, Daniel McKay's article, "Other ways to treat an animal: Natural horsemanship and the ethnic other", stays in Australia and takes New Zealand into its survey to unpack the mutually sustaining constructions of race and the non-human animal. Focusing specifically on Susan Brocker's novel, *Dreams of Warriors* (2010), McKay shows how contemporary postcolonial writing is reevaluating inter-species relations to enable new forms of neighbourliness and a recognition of ethnic Others among white majority cultures. In the following article, "Two views of an inevitable catastrophe that did not take place: Werner Herzog and Daniel Maximin on Guadeloupe, 1976", Jessica Stacey moves from postcolonial animal to environmental studies, indicatively demonstrating the field's continuing enlargement of the ethical issues taken into its purview. Reading Herzog's film *La Soufrière* against Daniel Mazimin's novel *Soufrières*, Stacey shows how the lack of spectacular climax to the disaster—the Gudaeloupian volcano never exploded, despite forecasts that it would—allows for different kinds of "catastrophe narration" to emerge. This literary and formal attempt to capture the slower violence of disasters in postcolonial contexts is the subject, too, of Kate Harlin's article, "'How can a river be red?': Petroviolence in Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*", which shows how the Nigerian writer's Booker-shortlisted novel expands chronologically to include geological timescales of environmental pasts and futures. Building on the recent "energy-turn" in postcolonial and world literary studies, Harlin's petrocultural analysis of *The Fishermen* astutely reveals the current climate crisis as another of imperialism's violent legacies.

It is widely acknowledged that climate-induced catastrophes must be met with new forms of cross-border solidarity, even as their impacts will be felt unevenly and all too viscerally along the lines of once colonising and now postcolonial nation-states. As the articles collected in this issue collectively show, postcolonial writing is invested—as it always has been—in the recovery and development of new literary forms with which to reveal and resist the continuing legacies of imperialism and colonialism. In particular, the articles in this issue are interested in offering models for alternative relations at a time of social fracture and political and environmental crisis. Imani Sanga's essay, "Sonic figures of heroism and the 1891 Hehe–German war in Mulokozi's novel *Ngome ya Mianzi*", also contributes to this shared project, reflecting on Mulokozi's 1991 Kiswahili novel and its recovery of a very specific history of anti-imperial resistance. Meanwhile, in the issue's final article, "Moving in 'a forest of hieroglyphs': Enigmatic and mutable signs of identity in Zoë Wicomb's *Playing in the Light*", María J. López explores how, in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, Wicomb explodes the myth of race, revealing it as a performed identity constrained by the colonialist "conception of the line as structuring principle of narrative form and storytelling". By undermining this "line" with "rhetorical and figurative disruptions", López continues, Wicomb "suggests a representation of people's identity and a telling of their lives characterised by provisionality, mutability and openness". Implicit in this analysis is a refutation of the more toxic elements of neoliberal identity politics, one that clears room for new solidarities—of the kind required to tackle the current array of climate and border crises seized upon by Modi in India and the new far right globally—to be built.

The issue concludes with five reviews, the first two of which serve as welcome reminders of the currently admirable scope of postcolonial criticism. In the first, Kerry-Jane Wallart assesses Sneharika Roy's study of "the postcolonial epic", which stretches from Herman Melville through to Amitav Ghosh, while in the second, Michael Pritchard celebrates Caroline Koegler's *Critical Branding*, a self-reflexive interrogation of the relationship between postcolonial academia and the force of the marketplace. The other three reviews then return readers to India, and to cross-national networks of literary culture and postcolonial resistance. Muneeza Shamsie reads Carlo Coppola's *Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970* for the literary links it recovers between India and Pakistan, before Bruce King reviews a new collection of India's "greatest modern poet", A.K. Ramanujan, entitled *Journeys: a poet's diary*, and a collection of letters exchanged between Indian poet Srinivas Rayaprol and US poet William Carlos Williams. Together, for King these books offer a "cornucopia of literary, cultural and even political history". But as postcolonial writing has long insisted, and as the career of a figure like Arundhati Roy aptly demonstrates, literature and politics are fundamentally, and generatively, bound to one another: in our current age of ongoing settler colonial projects, environmental crises and the rise of hyper-nationalist states, this issue reminds us these all have colonialism in common, and that networks of postcolonial writing continue to be an essential tool with which to resist and alleviate them.

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