Introduction

Ankhi Mukherjee and Ato Quayson

In "Hope Gardens," Lorna Goodison writes wistfully about the famous botanical garden in Kingston, Jamaica.

> Seated now in a seminar, you're perplexed
> as this post-colonial scholar unearths plot
> after heinous imperial plot buried behind
>
> our botanical gardens; and you think pity
> the people never knew this as we posed
> for Brownie camera captured photographs
> (*Supplying Salt and Light* 53)

The self-identification of the poetic persona in "Hope Gardens" is split between a Joycean mobility figure who will forge in the smithy of their soul the uncreated reality of fleeting experience – "You write to immortalize the long-gone / Sunday afternoons" – and the general reader and public, "We the ignorant, the uneducated," strolling in the garden or scrolling its poetic namesake.[1] Presumably, the seminar attendee is "perplexed" not just by the data dump of postcolonial research but that this establishment, originally a sugar plantation, and a relic of the successive Spanish and British Atlantic empires in Jamaica, should become an anachronistic space for visitors "lost in daydreams of owning own / places with lawns the square of a kerchief" (53). A bellicosity creeps into the tone of the poem. The Hope Gardens loyalists may be "unaware" and "unenlightened" about the English provenance of the roses blooming, the very roses that lend themselves freely as ciphers in assignations, but "so what?" (53, 54). Who cares about the "colonial design" – out of sight and mind in the Hope Gardens of today – when the "two-leaved wrought iron double gates" had been flung open to one and all (54)? The colonial estate was now a public park: supplementing the work of "*this* post-colonial scholar," the claimants of "*our* botanical gardens" had indeed ushered in a new and enabling form of public engagement with the country's colonial and slaveholding past.

Goodison's nuanced poem about the Hope Royal Botanical Gardens sheds light on the often-unbridgeable gap between the classroom and the world outside. The "post-colonial scholar" is often considered the killjoy whose knowledge of the history and aftermaths of colonialism subsumes the complex lived experiences of postcolonial societies. In this respect, she is not different than the critical race scholar, who in the United States is accused of a range of sins, including the distortion of American history, if they want to teach the roots of slavery. In his essay "Muse of History," Derek Walcott had cautioned against a petrifying of colonial history into myth, with its unchangeable binary of perpetrator and victim: "In the New World, servitude to the muse of history has produced a literature of recrimination and despair, a literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves or a literature of remorse written by the descendants of masters. Because this literature serves historic truth, it yellows into polemic or evaporates in pathos" (*What the Twilight Says* 37). What Walcott evokes instead is a "tough aesthetic" that "neither explains nor forgives history" (37). The civilian stakeholders in the hope and beauty offered by the Hope Gardens in Goodison's eponymous poem are not champions of what Patrick Wright, a staunch critic of the heritage industry in the UK, described as an "ethereal kind of holding company for the dead spirit of the nation" (51). As we see in Walcott's classic extrapolations, where characters with slave names such as "Helen" or "Achille" (in *Omeros*) are untroubled by the archetypes associated with their canonical counterparts in Homer's epics, Goodison marks a cultural forgetting and overcoming that is not willed cultural amnesia. However, this "tough aesthetic" of neither explaining nor forgiving history comes under pressure when decolonization itself has been thwarted and rendered incomplete.

Social ferment must be adjudged the ultimate progenitor of calls for decolonizing the literary curriculum or any curriculum for that matter. At a time when disciplines are scrambling to keep up with *both* the accelerations and upheavals of a global informational economy *and* radical geopolitical shifts away from Euro-American dominance, how might the literary curriculum be reconfigured even while paying attention to the views of writers such as Goodison, Walcott, Soyinka, and others like them who ask for the tough aesthetic love of critique? Since the turn of the century and well before that, we have witnessed genuine shifts in world literary flows brought on by proliferating information technology and translation networks; by transformed territorial and economic alignments in a post-Soviet era; and by the emergence of multiple war zones and new ethnic and religious conflagrations. Large-scale humanitarian crises wrought by wars and catastrophic climate change have brought new subalterns into our moral economy – asylum seekers, climate refugees, illegal migrants, and even large swathes of the Muslim populace demonized as a consequence of the ghoulish global visibility of fundamentalist versions of political Islam. A critical response to these developments on the part of literary scholars is that they ought not to ignore emergent literary topographies that can no longer be circumscribed by the classical postcolonial geographies of Europe and its others. The developments demand new modes of analysis that are at once conceptual, philological, translational, textual, generic, and more specifically decolonizing.

The term decolonization is often used interchangeably with "decoloniality" or "decolonial." "Decoloniality," in a general sense of the term, has many implications: the aftereffects of colonialism; a period of restoration and reparation; a questioning of Western modernity; an interrogation of and resistance to the colluding forces of capitalism, racism, and imperialism that structured colonial domination. The more specific – and prevalent – sense of "decoloniality" was developed by scholars from Latin and South America. One of the proponents of decolonial studies is Walter Mignolo, who, with Catherine E. Walsh, articulates the strongest position on the matter in *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (2018). As Mignolo and Walsh state clearly in the introduction, the legacies of decolonization – associated with the Bandung conference or the Conference of the Non-Aligned countries – are not the foundation of the decolonial project.

> For us, the horizon is not the political independence of nation-states (as it was for decolonization), nor is it only – or primarily – the confrontation with capitalism and the West (though both are central components of the modern/colonial matrix of power). Our interest and concern . . . are with the habits that modernity/coloniality implanted in all of us; with how modernity/coloniality has worked and continues to work to negate, disavow, distort and deny knowledges, subjectivities, world senses, and life visions. (4)

When the editors or contributors of *Decolonizing the English Literary Curriculum* use the term "decoloniality" or "decolonial," it is not marked by this absolute rejection of and break from the Western episteme or modernity. This volume is on the English literary curriculum after all, and our writers are well immersed in and even admiring of aspects of the tradition. We have already mentioned Lorna Goodison's and Derek Walcott's negotiations of European legacy; Ngũgĩ's writing was heavily steeped in the Bible; Wole Soyinka wrote his theory of tragedy drawing on and critiquing Nietzsche. Therefore, despite significant overlaps between postcolonial and decolonial thought – their critical attention to alternative epistemologies and marginalized spaces, for instance – we prefer the term "decoloniality" to denote the ongoing process of reevaluation of the literary curriculum.

It is vitally important to question why the discourse on decolonization has come *after* postcolonial thought and theory sprang fully formed from the brow of imperial history in the 1980s and 1990s. The "post" of postcolonialism literally means the period after colonialism has ended; it also refers to the contesting and supplanting of legacies for nation states and subjugated cultures to achieve self-sufficiency after the transfer of governance. It therefore seems strange to return to the time of decolonization in what, strictly speaking, is the postcolonial era. The answer to the question of why calls for decolonization continue after the end of formal colonialism lies in a hard-won understanding of the temporality of formal decolonization, which Simon Gikandi describes as an "interregnum": "the lives of subjects stranded in time as it were" (1). Gikandi cites Hannah Arendt to understand this problem of time as a "scission or rupture in what is no longer simply an after or a before" (2).

Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, written after the end of formal colonialism in 1960, is not usually read as a classic work of decolonization, as Gikandi points out. It offers neither a scathing critique nor a poetics of disillusionment about the initial promise of the postcolonial state, now descending rapidly into communal conflict and a civil war. Gikandi interprets *Arrow of God* as a definitive work of the crisis of decolonization, which shows how late colonialism haunts the culture of the modern "even as it sought to reconstitute African society as an impoverished version of identities and histories that had already been questioned in Europe" (2). What makes it a narrative of decolonization is its depiction of the failed postcolonial present. "Rather than present the problematic of colonialism as the opposition between two temporalities, between the past and the present, the novel is often bogged down by a present that it cannot name," Gikandi observes (4). Decolonization, in this definition, is not an agon between tradition and modernity but a disease of modern colonial time: the subject can neither seek redemption in a primordial past nor imagine a postcolonial future.

The very moment that the English colonial agent, Winterbottom, calls the old priest "the only witness of truth" (7), Ezeulu is deauthorized and made a stooge. As Achebe has shown in *Things Fall Apart*, imperialist axiomatics will always replace African tradition with its own invented tradition: the power imbalance is such that the two could not possibly coexist. The unique feature of *Arrow of God* is that Ezeulu is thwarted not by colonial agency alone but his own will to address – and we quote Gikandi again – "something lacking or missing in the hermeneutics of culture" (5). Ezeulu is torn between his nostalgia for a ruined past and his own zeal to create a space for the project of colonial modernity, one that sees him hand over a son to the missionary education system to act as his eyes and ears among them. His is a time of confusion, wedded as he is to the authority of the gods and communitarian traditions but at the same time disenchanted with the narratives of modernity. His crisis is not accelerated by a perceived superiority of the colonizer – Mr. Winterbottom is portrayed as sick and weak, his narrative of the internecine conflict between Umuaro and Okperi meant to be laughed at by the reader – nor is it the case that *Arrow of God* cannot imagine an African world before colonialism. Decolonization, instead, is that time after colonialism which makes Ezeulu, trapped between the anachronistic temporality of the past and unknowable futures, feel impermanent, like a placeholder:

> He was merely a watchman. His power was no more than the power of a child over a goat that was said to be his. As long as the goat was alive it could be his; he would find it food and take care of it. But the day it was slaughtered he would know soon enough who the real owner was. (3)

The materiality of this in-between time hyphenating the change of regimes is psychic, not just physical or even political. And the English literary curriculum has a part to play in this change of psychic regimes. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o published "On the Abolition of the English Department" in 1972, in which he made a special case for decommissioning an unexamined idea of English literary study that he thought was a form of continuing colonialism in his country Kenya and elsewhere in the postcolonial world. The general implications of Ngũgĩ's argument have continued to ramify in the design of the English literary curriculum in many parts of the world, but nowhere more insistently in recent times than in the Euro-American academy, whose doors, unlike the doors of Hope Gardens, have not been flung wide open.

All calls to decolonize the curriculum are also bound to be context-specific, such that in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Canada, decolonizing typically involves the two categories of Indigenous literatures and the literature written by immigrants. As Elizabeth McMahon notes in this volume (Chapter4), the harsh historical processes of settler colonialism in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand have led to ingrained social inequalities that have both shaped the study of English literature in the two countries and triggered the movement for the decolonization of the literary curriculum. In Ghana or South Africa, as both Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang (Chapter 11) and James Ogude (Chapter 26) also illustrate for us in the volume, decolonizing the curriculum involves not just countering the traditional English menu of Shakespeare, Milton, or Chaucer with Black writers from each country, it also involves the introduction of new methodologies for reading literacy alongside orality and the breaking of ingrained habits of thought that had been inculcated during the colonial and apartheid period and that continue to persist in the postcolonial era. At the heart of any context for decolonizing the curriculum then are critical social questions about changes in society that are tied to the rising voices of those minorities that had hitherto been marginalized.

While such calls are context-specific, they all share the central impulse of being tied to the correction of social anomalies specifically linked to the situation of oppressed or underrepresented minorities. In other words, the point is not just to detail the gaps in the curriculum but in using the curriculum as a way of changing society itself. If the echo of Marx's maxim of the relationship between describing the world and the active effort to change it for the better is detected here, it is not entirely accidental.[2] For the term decolonizing itself must be referred to the agendas of the newly decolonized world that was born in the second half of the twentieth century through various processes of struggle in India, Africa, Southeast Asia, and other places. These struggles may be described as only one installment of the decolonizing process, earlier ones having occurred in the processes that led to Latin American independence in the early 1800s. And, as Robert Young instructs us in *Empire, Colony, Postcolony*, all accounts of decolonization must also reflect upon the fact that internal struggles for decolonization have been continually taking place in the settler colonies of Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Canada, and the USA, especially in relation to the historical and continuing struggles of their Indigenous populations. This realization then serves to complicate what we might understand under the rubric of decolonizing.

A shift in the perception of what constitutes the decolonizing context for understanding the writing that emerged from the Global South had first been suggested in the work of Albert Memmi, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and other postcolonial liberationist thinkers from the 1950s. Thus in 1955, Aimé Césaire outlined the earliest form of colonial discourse analysis in his monumental *Discours sur le colonialisme*, which was followed in rapid succession by Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon setting out a mode of analysis that was rhetorically highly sophisticated as well as refracting revolutionary, political, and cultural ideals. C. L. R James, George Lamming, and V. S. Naipaul also each raised key questions about nation and narration, the struggle between universalism and localism in the literature of the newly independent nations, and the fraught intersections of the aesthetic, the ethical, and the political dimensions of these new forms of writing. A major return to these writers has taken place in the past twenty years or so, aimed at finding the right modes for grasping the practical background to the processes for decolonizing the curriculum. In her influential essay "On Decolonisation and the University," Priyamvada Gopal argues that anticolonialism "is the missing term, a pivotal absence, in academic discussions of decolonization today" (886). Anticolonial resistance varied "according to historical exigencies" (886), and took the form of a wide range of activities which cannot be subsumed under nationalism, as Gopal points out.

"Reframing discussions of decolonisation in the light of anticolonial thought – as the theory and practice of anticolonialism rather than a mere theoretical variant of postcolonialism – gives grounding and historical heft to them. It also enables a discussion of decolonisation as necessarily dialogical, and a process with a horizon of aspiration," states Gopal (886). Positing anticolonialism as an ideality and a futurity – a process rather than a destination that is reached – Gopal argues for an anticolonial university that "pushes to the horizon of decolonisation" rather than a decolonized one (889). The anticolonial university, instead of seeing education as redemptive of the very colonial histories that has shaped it, seeks instead to interrogate and eventually abolish the coercive knowledge systems that have continued to haunt it.

Few texts on decolonization are as powerful as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o *Decolonising the Mind*, which began its life as the 1984 Robb Lectures in honor of a former chancellor of Auckland University. Acknowledging the Māori people who had extended him a warm welcome inside and outside the university, Ngũgĩ is happy to note in the introduction that his lectures on the politics of language in African literature had coincided with Māori language week: as if in a gesture of solidarity with the "beauty of resistance" he had seen in Māori culture, Ngũgĩ declares this book as his farewell to English (ix). *Decolonising the Mind* starts with a discussion of imperialism, or what Ngũgĩ terms "the rule of consolidated finance capital" (2). Its yoke is total, spelling "economic, political, military, cultural and psychological consequences for the people of the world" (2). Not only are countries in the

Global South mortgaged to the IMF, the wretched and the dispossessed of the earth are decimated by what Ngũgĩ calls the "cultural bomb," whose task is to discredit a people's belief in their languages, epistemologies, heritage, and environment (3). "Amidst this wasteland which it has created, imperialism presents itself as the cure," Ngũgĩ states, forcing its victims to collude with the theft of their languages and treasures of the mind (3).

Imperialism is embedded in universities, its foundations built into language and literary studies: these institutions were set up in the colonies to produce yes-men, mimic men, and the "cool, level-headed servant of the Empire celebrated in Kipling's poem 'If'," as Ngũgĩ scathingly comments (93). This agenda continues to manifest in the way in which English (language and literature) is taught at university level across the globe, in the institutional imbalance in the teaching of indigenous versus imported languages and literatures, and in the lack of contextualizing of imported languages, intellectual traditions, theory, and philosophy. For the postcolonial or metropolitan university to not become neoimperial, for it to proclaim "liberty from theft," as Ngũgĩ puts it, it must unflinchingly confront colonial legacies through an ongoing scrutiny of unexamined course content and curricula as well as teaching, learning, and assessment methods (3). Decolonization, especially where it was granted rather than won, did not necessarily force the formerly colonized to self-decolonize and think for themselves, Achille Mbembe states in *Out of the Dark Night*: "rather than being the site of a renewed genesis of meaning, [decolonization] took on the appearance of an encounter with oneself through effraction" (4). If we note that the word "effraction" means "breaking and entering, burglary," then what Mbembe seems to be saying here is that historical decolonization simply continued a mode of violent theft against the formerly colonized. We can see here echoes of Ngũgĩ's comments on the effects of the curriculum on the psyches of the people as far apart as the Māori and his own Kikuyu.

Decolonizing Orientations

Every so often demands for reform of the English literature curriculum are made from equity-seeking groups, either for the overhauling of the curriculum or for its complete replacement with something that appears more equitable to such equity-seeking groups. Thus, the term decolonizing must be understood as having historically specific as well as metaphorical implications. While it has come to define actions that seek autonomy from the legacies of colonization, slavery, White supremacy, sexism, and

Eurocentrism in a rapidly changing yet interconnected world, decolonization also provides a vocabulary by which new demands for social equity may help to reshape the literary curriculum in the direction of greater sensitivity to urgent racial and social justice issues in the world itself. The term "equity-seeking groups" stands for all those who feel themselves politically and socially marginalized by the lived systems in which they exist. At a minimal level, a list of equity-seeking groups would include the following: people of color and racial minorities, persons with disabilities, persons with non-heteronormative sexual orientations, formerly colonized people, Native peoples (pertaining specifically to the settler communities of Australia, Canada, and the USA), women, Jews, and Muslims, among others. The extreme racial and social injustice manifested in the killing of George Floyd (to which we shall return) has served to magnify the other injuries suffered by different equity-seeking groups, thus necessitating the linking of the quest for racial justice to that of social justice as its necessary corollary. The demands of equity-seeking groups have turned as much on calls for statistical representation on the curriculum as on how literary texts are interpreted from the perspective of the marginalized in the first place.

A second set of arguments for reform has also come from theoretical perspectives that do not necessarily attach themselves to any particular equity-seeking group. Thus, the canon wars of the 1980s centered on questions of meaning-making and interpretation and came from theoretical perspectives that sought to decenter long-held reading practices in general and to show that these were complicit with forms of hegemony and oppression in the world at large. Marxism, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis were the most coherent of such models adduced for decentering existing reading practices, and they in their turn inspired models of interpretation such as postcolonialism, feminism, disability studies, and critical race studies, among various others.

The third category of calls for reforms of the literary curriculum has come from interdisciplinary or intersectional perspectives. Such interdisciplinary calls typically arise due to the recognition that the problems in the real world are much too complex for any one disciplinary perspective to be able to deal with and that the urgency of such problems requires the necessary breaking down of standard disciplinary protocols. Thus, arguments from the perspectives of the Anthropocene and of environmental studies tend to by pass all monodisciplinary straitjackets to insist on the urgency of the questions that face humanity as a justification for ignoring disciplinary boundaries altogether. For us, these three decolonizing orientations must be seen as converging on the question of social justice, made particularly urgent by the fact that the impetus for curriculum reform in 2020 came from the transatlantic civil rights, Abolitionist, and anti-racist Black Lives Matter movement today. We intend in *Decolonizing the English Literary Curriculum* to include all three decolonizing orientations described above and will be using the term decolonizing as an umbrella concept to index the interests of different types of calls for fundamental curricular reform. Each chapter in the collection will be explicitly tasked with illustrating the necessity and advantages of reform from specific decolonial perspectives, with evidence-based arguments from classroom contexts as a matter of principle. The significance of this volume lies in the complete overhaul of how we think about the study of literature and its relationship to issues of racial and social justice in the world.

Black Lives Matter and Calls for Decolonizing the Curriculum

The death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police on May 25, 2020, marked a watershed in reactions to anti-Black racism in the USA and elsewhere and indeed triggered intense debates about the pressing need to decolonize the curriculum. The calls since 2020 strike a different note from similar calls that have taken place in English departments starting in the 1960s following the Civil Rights Movement. Now, these calls appear tied also to the politics of social address and the claims to public space both in the USA and the UK, but arguably even more intensely joined in South Africa, where the Rhodes Must Fall movement started, as we shall see presently. The intensity of demonstrations all over the world in response to the killing of George Floyd extended to places previously not known as being much concerned with questions of Blackness, such as Japan, Argentina, and Australia, among various others. The African Union, the European Union, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and several countries across the world put out statements expressing their horror at the manner of George Floyd's death and expressing support for the Black Lives Matter movement.

The demonstrations have also forced serious soul-searching regarding the literary curriculum. Bernadine Evaristo, cowinner of the 2019 Booker Prize, used the platform offered by the 2020 New Statesman/Goldsmiths Lecture to speak eloquently about the need for diversifying the curriculum in the UK not only to incorporate more Black writers, but also more writing by women and other people of color. It is a shock to learn, for example, that the AQA (formerly Assessments and Qualifications Alliance), the largest examining board in the UK, does not "feature a single book by a black author among set texts for its GCSE English Literature syllabus and has only two novels by non-white authors – Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let me Go*."[3] Elsewhere, calls from the Black Curriculum's founder Lavinya Stennett for Black history to be taught in British schools systematically throughout the education system and not just during Black History Month have increased pressure on the UK government, which has in its turn issued a statement decrying the use of critical race theory in schools. As its Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch asserted in Parliament: "We do not want teachers to teach their white pupils about white privilege and inherited racial guilt."[4] This echoed Donald Trump's attack on critical race theory some weeks prior to the UK minister's statement. In the case of Trump, a presidential edict toward the end of his term in 2020 threatened to withhold federal funding from any government department that held diversity training for its staff.[5] That the subject matter of critical race studies has been fundamentally misunderstood by both governments is not as significant as the fact that both feel compelled to issue such statements after the rise of the strong coalition against racial injustice in the two countries following George Floyd's death. The battle lines for hearts and minds seems to have been drawn, with the stakes very high on both governmental and popular fronts.

Debates about the English curriculum have also been energized in English departments across the USA, which historically has always had intense arguments on race and racism given its history of racial oppression and the battles against these from the eras of Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, and now Black Lives Matter. The leader in the debates on reform of the English literary curriculum has without a doubt been the English Department at the University of Chicago, whose statement on Black Lives Matter posted on their website shortly after the death of George Floyd set the tone for other such statements in English departments across the USA. In their revised statement of July 2020, the Chicago English Department noted among other things that "English as a discipline has a long history of providing aesthetic rationalizations for colonization, exploitation, extraction, and anti-Blackness. Our discipline is responsible for developing hierarchies of cultural production that have contributed directly to social and systematic determinations of whose lives matter and why."[6] While Chicago's clarion call was much applauded, their decision to devote all graduate places in the 2020/2021 cycle exclusively to students interested in working in Black Studies or with faculty of color was met with bewilderment and some disdain on social media. There are currently seventy-seven students studying for their PhDs in the English Department at Chicago, but all the ire on social media was reserved for the five entry places in question for 2020. While several English departments in both the USA and the UK have made similar pronouncements in support of Black Lives Matter, none has been as bold as Chicago's to declare a special focus on Black Studies.

Rhodes Must Fall

Ankhi grew up in a small town in West Bengal, its anglicized name, Burdwan, dating from its history as a district capital during the Raj. The Bengali name, Bardhaman, which means "expanding," commemorates Mahavira or Vardhamana (599–521 BCE), the twenty-fourth Tirthankara of Jainism, who consecrated the ground on his travels. A beloved landmark here is a coronation arch that was originally called Bijay Toran, after the erstwhile ruler Bijay Chand Mahtab, but was informally renamed Curzon Gate after the Viceroy of India's grand visit in 1904. The name Curzon Gate (Karjon, in Bengali pronunciation) has stuck, its provenance forgotten every day by the townspeople and pigeons defiling it. This is one of countless examples of the selective amnesia of erstwhile colonies, as vividly depicted in the Lorna Goodison poem with which the chapter starts. When Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) arrived in Oxford from Cape Town in 2015, Ankhi notes that her iconoclasm toward dirty history's artifacts was tempered by the instability of signs she had known, where what sounds like a triumphalist Bengali moniker befitting a thriving agrarian economy ("Bardhaman") is actually the name of an unworldly transient and where fondness for a name-relic (Curzon) doesn't imply that the terrible repercussions of Lord Curzon's 1905 partition of Bengal have been forgiven.[7] RMF redux, a debate reignited by the #BlackLivesMatter protests in the aftermaths of George Floyd's murder, occasioned no such dithering.

The Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement returned to Oxford in May 2020, a debate that was itself reignited worldwide by the Black Lives Matter protests in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder in the United States in the same month. Liberation movements such as Rhodes Must Fall constitute the critical move of toppling acquiescence to redress incomplete emancipation and a failed postcolonial project: decolonization is the very name we give the process of disaggregating the present from a future overdetermined by the colonial past. This reckoning, revived by the killing of George Floyd, came during a pandemic which was also racial, impacting communities of color disproportionately, and the chilling realization that Floyd's death was preventable if a mass mobilization of the scale of that year's protests had demanded Abolition earlier. When Oriel College, where the Rhodes statue is lodged, declared in May 2021 that despite the wishes of the college's governing body – and the sympathetic recommendations of an independent commission (comprised of academics, city councillors, alumni, administrators, and journalists) – Rhodes wouldn't fall after all, Simukai Chigudu lamented the missed opportunity for utilizing this symbolic action as a harbinger of real change. Associate Professor of African Politics at Oxford, Chigudu has been at the forefront of the RMF campaign since 2015. His article in the *Guardian* unconsciously echoes Simon Gikandi's depiction of decolonization as a crisis of the present: "Arguments over statues are always about the present and not the past. They are about which aspects of our cultural heritage we choose to honour in public space and why. They are about what values we wish to promote and who has a voice in these matters."[8]

Decolonization brings with it, Frantz Fanon writes in *Wretched of the Earth*, "a new language and a new humanity" (30). One of the rallying cries of RMF redux, that of decolonizing the curriculum, shows, as had the previous Fallist movements at the Universities of Cape Town, Wits, and Oxford, a radical disenchantment with an education system unable to shake off the yoke of a tyrannical past and engender a viable decolonized future.[9] For campuses to become inclusive environments, courses should not be dominated by White, male, Eurocentric perspectives, a review from Universities UK stated in 2019. Baroness Amos, the first Black woman to serve as a minister in the British cabinet and in the House of Lords, said this applies to science subjects as much as it does to the arts and humanities.[10] "There are things like who is on the reading lists, how much are you enabling a critique of different approaches to subjects, who is being recognized as being someone who can make a valuable contribution on this?"[11] Decolonizing the curriculum necessitates the hiring of academic staff with relevant expertise and attracting and retaining more Black scholars to correct the original, majoritarian quota system. Iyiola Solanke, Professor of EU Law and Social Justice, compiled data for the Runnymede Trust (2017) that showed Black women constituting less than 2 percent of the professoriate.[12] According to HESA (the Higher Education Statistics Agency), there are 350 Black female professors in the UK out of a total of 18,000 professors. Solanke, founder of the "Black Professors Forum" uses "Black" politically to indicate not only African and Caribbean women, but also women of Asian and Arab descent. She states that the term Black is used to empower these communities of women, who are ethnic minorities in the UK despite being global majorities. "Allyship," a neologism forged by the virulence of racism, is applicable to the aims of the Black Professors Forum, which seeks to address a higher education system where only a handful of universities have more than five Black female professors.[13]

Universities, especially those in the Old World, are unlikely to have hair-trigger responses to student unrest, as change involves structural revisions – not just superficial curriculum revision and expansion but acquiring funding for new hires, coupled with new hiring strategies. In departments of English, where we teach the history of literature and language from Anglo-Saxon to World Literature, chronology is Eurochronology to a large extent, and to situate oneself in literary tradition is to inhabit structures that are historically Eurocentric, patriarchal, classist, xenophobic, or racist. We can, where relevant, read literature as a textual as well as a territorial inscription and remain vigilant of its implication in a given culture's criteria and contestation of value. Decolonizing the English literary curriculum would also entail a concerted effort to retrieve forgotten and discredited literary forms and figures, proletariat and women's voices, and such projects have been gathering momentum since the last quarter of the twentieth century.

So, how can one teach the canon in the mode of decolonizing? Let's take a literary history paper that extends from 1760–1830, for instance. Here, students can learn about postcolonial Austen and about Byron, Shelley, or Coleridge's self-situation as English poets and cultural arbiters in the mediated landscapes of an empire which included the near and far East. We can look at Romantic women writers (Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Hannah More, or Phillis Wheatley) and the antislavery movements they supported. We could examine the politics of Thomas de Quincey's anxiety about cancerous kisses from Nilotic crocodiles, reading it with reference to Charles Nicholas Sigisbert Sonnini's "Travels in Lower and Upper Egypt," which moves from crocodiles to the "unexampled depravation and brutality" of bestial Upper Egypt men with alacrity quoted in Lindop, p. 136. This could be studied alongside Richard Burton's *Arabian Nights*, where he deploys the metonymic meanings of the crocodile in Sonnini's work. These are some of the lessons on the period to be taken from Nigel Leask's chapter in this volume (Chapter 20).

Substantive canon expansion, however, is nothing without an informed critique of the canonical method. Acknowledging a certain complexion of literary genealogy, we need to be mindful about not perpetuating its politics by perversely denying the diversity of literatures in English in the postcolonial, global world. The impetus for the "worlding" of literature – treating it as embedded and embodied – has largely come from humanities scholarship, through the emergence of equity-seeking feminist, postcolonial, gender, queer, race, disability, and ecocritical studies, which also have vital activist dimensions. We need to translate innovation in scholarship into renovated teaching practices, working not against the grain of institutions but with their financial, administrative, and moral support.

Aesthetic and Sentimental Education

One thing we might take from the current debates about the English curriculum is how they now centralize literature as the source of sentimental and aesthetic education. But the aesthetic domain must be defined not just as pertaining to the beautiful or arts-related matters but as having to do with the distribution of the sensible, as Jacques Rancière notes in *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2004). The distribution of the sensible implies varying processes of validation and exclusion that are both policed and enforced in the ways in which English literature is taught. The aesthetic domain must also be understood in the sense in which Spivak uses it in *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, where it is the last possible means of yoking education to the goals of democracy and social justice. Given that literature does provide a form of sentimental and aesthetic education, but that such education cannot be divorced from the contexts and ways in which literature is studied, it means that the literary curriculum must be examined for the part it plays in the change of social and psychic regimes. It is also a well-known fact that literary texts are used in a variety of disciplinary contexts, such as in history, anthropology, criminology, cognitive studies, disability studies, cinema studies, psychology, philosophy, classics, law, medicine, and urban studies programs among others. Therefore, what passes for sentimental education in the teaching and research on English has additional impact in other disciplinary contexts. What is taught and how it is taught is of fundamental concern for how we think about both racial and social justice well beyond the discipline.

The Western canon of literature around which such a sentimental education may be imagined, however, is a colonial relic itself, enmired in its hierarchies and colluding in its exclusions and occlusions. In the introductory pages of *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison describes canon revision cartographically, as her project of extending the study of American literature into a wider landscape: “I want to draw a map, so to speak, of a critical geography, and use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure, and close exploration as did the original charting of the New World – without the mandate of conquest” (3). The primary incentive for Morrison’s undertaking is the abiding yet not fully acknowledged African presence in American literature, a corollary to 400 years of Africans and African Americans in the United States. The coherence of American literature, Morrison states, exists because of this “unsettled and unsettling” population (6). While national literature presented itself as emanating from a singular Americanness, the Africanist presence was deliberately separated from and made unaccountable to it. “It is possible, for example, to read Henry James scholarship exhaustively and never arrive at a nodding mention, much less a satisfactory treatment, of a black woman who lubricates the turn of the plot and becomes the agency of moral choice and meaning in *What Maisie Knew*” (13). Decolonizing the curriculum, in this reckoning, is about confronting the codes and restrictions around omissions and contradictions, omissions which guarantee the false coherence of national and paranational entities such as “American literature.” Furthermore, the contemplation of these excluded bodies, voices, and influences, Morrison states, “should not be permitted to hover at the margins of the literary imagination” (5). In fact, they should be brought to the foreground to start unravelling the very technology through which nationalist literature in the USA has shaped itself in a reactive mode to “a real or fabricated Africanist presence” (6).

The curatorial task of retrieving subaltern voices and spaces is key to preparing for a future of institutional change where student and teacher can participate in what bell hooks, in *Teaching Community*, calls “a liberating mutuality” in the classroom (xv). The report prepared by UUK and the NUS (National Union of Students) in 2019, titled “#ClosingTheGap,” which Baroness Amos led, showed a 13 percent attainment gap between White students and their BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) counterparts.[14] Expressing her shock at this statistic, Baroness Amos stated plainly that for universities to become junctions of “opportunity and aspiration,” the fight for change must equally address curriculum, representation, pedagogy, and student experience. *Decolonizing the English Literary Curriculum* is an international and interdisciplinary undertaking, involving scholars across generations and with a wide variety of expertise, which demonstrates that looking awry at the English literary curriculum can provide material and psychic assistance to the ongoing campaign against structural inequality in universities.

Structure of the Volume

The essays in *Decolonizing the English Literary Curriculum* have been divided into four parts: Identities, Methodologies, Interdisciplinarity and Literary Studies, and Canon Revisions. The chapters in each part focus on specific problems in the English literary curriculum and also suggest some pedagogical points for consideration. No two chapters are the same, either in approach or examples, making the volume overall a wide-ranging reflection on the literary curriculum in general from a diverse set of perspectives.

In the "Identities" section, the first four chapters focus on specific national or cultural contexts. Joe Cleary writes about the unique challenge of decolonizing the English department in the context of the complex colonial history of Ireland (Chapter 2); Elizabeth McMahon adopts an intersectional approach to strategize about decolonizing pedagogies in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (Chapter 4). Margery Fee and Deanna Reder turn to Indigenous epistemes to reimagine the human connection with land and nature in Canada (Chapter 3). Two of the chapters in this section focus the discussion from the perspective of specific equity-seeking groups. Ankhi Mukherjee (Chapter 6) argues that Black British literature should not be treated as an isomorphism of Black culture and society: despite their immersion the realities of Black life, works such as Zadie Smith's reclaim the aesthetic autonomy denied to writers of color. Brinda Bose finds the possibility of decolonization in matching pluralities of methodology to the pluralities of genders and sexualities (Chapter 5). Paul Giles's chapter attempts a more wide-ranging discussion of how to decolonize the university that, alongside this Introduction, serves to lay out some key questions that are then picked up in the various chapters (Chapter 1).

"Methodologies" carries chapters that focus on specific topics ranging from broadly conceptual and theoretical questions to singular pedagogical challenges. Aarthi Vadde's chapter explores ways of decolonizing the value and selection criteria guiding anthologies (Chapter 7). Stefan Helgesson examines the role of Marxism in historical contexts of and contemporary debates in decolonization (Chapter 9). Ato Quayson's chapter asks what reading for justice might entail, and how this project of decolonizing the English literary curriculum can go beyond the limits of postcolonial or critical race studies (Chapter 13). Akshya Saxena proposes a mode of reworlding the English literary curriculum that begins by examining the relationship of English to other language worlds and literary cultures (Chapter 12). Three of the chapters dwell on specific pedagogical contexts in different parts of the world: Jeanne-Marie Jackson proposes a "culturally minimalist" approach to teaching African literature in the US academy (Chapter 10); Joanne Leow traces the decolonizing tactics of confabulation in contemporary Singaporean literature (Chapter 8); Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang writes creative and critical interventions in decolonizing the teaching of African literature at the University of Ghana (Chapter 11).

"Interdisciplinary and Literary Studies" explores different modes of interdisciplinarity and how these may shape a decolonizing agenda. Joseph R. Slaughter explores how human rights, international law, and world literature may be revised in tandem so that "the empire's preferred prefabricated forms" do not continue in perpetuity (Chapter 14). Christopher Krentz's chapter brings disability studies into conversation with the challenges of decolonizing literary studies (Chapter 15). Ronald Charles argues that decolonizing the English literary curriculum could start with the Christian Bible (Chapter 16), while Sloan Mahone demonstrates how insights gleaned from literary works – and literary and cultural criticism – have been used in the field of history of medicine to rethink the colonial legacies and structures of knowledge production (Chapter 17).

The final cluster of chapters in "Canon Revisions" goes directly to the canon and what Nigel Leask calls the "monoglot regime of Global English," arguing for modes of critical teaching when it comes to the staples of the English literary curriculum. These range from reflections and recommendations on specific literary history papers (Geraldine Heng on medieval literature [Chapter 18]; Leask on Romanticism [Chapter 20]; Nasser Mufti on Victorian literature [Chapter 21]; Debjani Ganguly on World Literature [Chapter 22]) and key authors (Katherine Gillen on Shakespeare through a Latin American perspective [Chapter 19]) to those that focus on areas of specialist study within the curriculum (Sandeep Parmar on English Diasporic women's poetry [Chapter 23]; William Ghosh on Caribbean literature [Chapter 25]; Nathan Suhr-Sytsma on postcolonial poetry [Chapter 24]). James Ogude's chapter on the Rhodes Must Fall movement (Chapter 26) sets the question of methods and pedagogy firmly within the particular case of postapartheid South Africa and the calls for curricular reform that were made in that heady moment of collective action and social critique.

Notes

1. The famous line from James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is as follows: "I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (Joyce 213).
2. The original quotation is: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to *change* it," and is the eleventh of the "Theses on Feuerbach." See Karl Marx with Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (Guilford, CT: Prometheus Books), 571.
3. See Alison Flood, "Bernadine Evaristo Slams Literature Teaching Bias for 'Whiteness and Maleness'," *The Guardian*, October 2, 2020, www.theguardian.com/books/2020/oct/02/bernardine-evaristo-slams-english-academic-for-bias-to-whiteness-and-maleness.
4. See Daniel Trilling, "Why Is the UK Government Suddenly Targeting 'Critical Race Theory'?" *The Guardian*, October 23, 2020, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/23/uk-critical-race-theory-trump-conservatives-structural-inequality.
5. See Fabiola Cineas, "Critical Race Theory, and Trump's War on It, Explained," *Vox*, September 24, 2020, www.vox.com/2020/9/24/21451220/critical-race-theory-diversity-training-trump.
6. See https://english.uchicago.edu/.
7. www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/partition-of-bengal-1905-divide-and-rule-protests-1368958-2018-10-16.
8. The Oriel College website addresses the reasons for the non-removal of the controversial statue here, adding that "the Governing Body of the College, as charity trustees and following the receipt of regulatory and legal advice, took the decision to utilise funds to focus on the contextualisation of the statue in the immediate term, rather than pursue a course of action that was almost certain to result in failure." www.oriel.ox.ac.uk/about/the-rhodes-legacy/. Chigudu's *Guardian* piece, "More than just a statue" can be found here: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/24/oriel-college-rhodes-statue-anti-racist-anger.
9. See Sanders for an account and analysis of the South African hashtag campus movements of 2015–16.
10. Amos became the ninth Director of SOAS in 2015. She has been Master of University College, Oxford, since 2020.
11. www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2019/05/01/universities-must-decolonise-curriculum-boost-black-students/.
12. Solanke is the founder of Black Female Professors Forum: https://blackfemaleprofessorsforum.org/about/about/.
13. "Allyship" signifies solidarities between and within marginalized groups, as well advocacy for inclusion and equality by those who are not themselves marginalized.
14. The report can be found here: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/latest/insights-and-analysis/closing-gap-how-can-university-leaders.

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