

Introduction

Postcolonial Intellectuals, European Publics

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QUESTIONS

The definition of “public intellectual” is a contested terrain that includes a plurality of positions, ranging from the custodianship of universal values to hyperspecialization. Who can claim to be a public intellectual? Are people who have a public role and perform intellectual labor by definition public intellectuals? How is this activity held in regard by society, both in the past and at present, across different cultures and settings? And why is Europe relevant to this discussion?

It is widely held that the figure of the intellectual is nowadays in decline and bound to disappear any time soon (Posner 2001, Kristof 2014). Instead of mourning their alleged slow death, people holding this opinion call for a return of intellectuals, thereby subscribing, more or less implicitly, to Plato’s conviction (1991) that societies should be ruled by those committed to activities of the intellect. It seems that intellectuals have never lost their appeal as “democracy helpers” (Miztal 2007, 1), even after historical events have proved the contrary. It is thus not unusual, in today’s intellectual landscape, to come across interventions such as Martha Nussbaum’s (2010) in defense of the humanities’ ability to save democracy, or Achille Mbembe’s (2016), who has recently taken a stance in the debate on the place of humanism vis-à-vis the decolonization of knowledge.¹ But a postcolonial analysis has the duty not to take for granted any such convictions. Which kinds of intellectual figures are waning? What is the relation between intellectual work and politics?

That we are witnessing either the rise or the decline of intellectuals is of little help if we are to tell a story about them, let alone in postcolonial times. As Helen Small (2002, 10–11) suggests, the notion of the crisis might well be a Western cliché, informed by a universalistic bias that equates the

conditions of all intellectuals regardless of the specificities of different social groupings. Definitional problems are not narrowed down when one enters the field of postcolonial intellectuals. Their role as mediators between Western institutions and diasporic, racialized, and subaltern constituencies is perhaps even more contested. Yet the very phrase *postcolonial intellectual* calls for a displacement of the question: If it roughly designates someone whose actions are carried out in alternative or marginal (counter-)publics (Fraser 1992), why linger over definitions that pertain to the official public sphere? Why, instead, not detect the workings of postcolonial intellectuals at the various points of their emergence? This book is not an exercise in authorizing postcolonial intellectuals or distinguishing who can and cannot be labeled as such, but an exploration of the unexpected forms that intellectual labor takes in times of postcoloniality.

Although postcolonial intellectuals share a critical stance toward Europe, they rarely deny their engagement with it—if only to unveil the imperialist project of European modernity. Since postcoloniality designates not just the condition of the inquired object or inquiring subject, but also and foremost a *perspective* that the latter adopts in articulating her claim to knowledge, it is not the empirical fact of a given location that characterizes postcolonial intellectuals but their *politics* of location (Rich 1984). Similarly, a postcolonial investigation of postcolonial intellectuals in Europe, as redundant as this may sound, should not reproduce (epistemologically) the Eurocentrism that many postcolonial intellectuals have been—and still are—committed to countering. Thus, a fundamental question they compel us to ask is: How to adopt a critical perspective when the location at hand had ties, and continues to have ties, with European colonial modernity?

The combination of the terms *postcolonial*, *intellectual*, and *Europe* therefore marks the site of a problem instead of offering a working definition. With this problem in mind, let us briefly scrutinize the ways in which three major postcolonial critics—Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Stuart Hall—have conceived and reflected upon their (and others') intellectual activity.

CONTEXTS

A book devoted to postcolonial intellectuals cannot but start with Edward Said, whose life trajectory and thought continue to interrogate the enactment of intellectual labor in the diaspora.² In his seminal 1993 Reith Lectures (1996), Said portrays the intellectual as someone who belongs to the established intelligentsia yet is always slightly out of place, unsettled, and unsettling. He deems this figure *exilic*: an adjective to be understood both

literally, as in belonging nowhere (here, Said draws on his experience of displacement),³ and metaphorically, as in “outsider, amateur and disturber of the status quo” (x). Amateurship is particularly relevant, for it safeguards intellectuals from the threat of expertise. Since they are constrained within the boundaries of institutions, they must maintain a “relative independence” (xvi); that is, an almost romantic spirit of opposition and dissidence.

In this brief summary of Said’s take on the role of the intellectual, not only the underlying romanticization of this figure should be noted (Lazarus in Gunne 2012; see also Lovesey 2016, 13–22), but also the fluctuation “between the definitional and the prescriptive” (Collini 2006, 427), between what the intellectual is and what she should do. This gap certainly does not resolve the definitional problems mentioned earlier, yet the overlapping of the two registers signifies the constitutive tensions of the postcolonial intellectual, conscious of being “aligned with institutions” (Said 1996, 67) and simultaneously committed to institutional critique. Instead of writing off this ambiguity as a site of confusion, it should rather be emphasized as the driving force of the postcolonial intellectual’s vocation: her *raison d’être*.

In a less optimistic tone, Said’s earlier essay “Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World” (1986) characterizes the postcolonial intellectual as someone whose voice is likely to be unheard because it exceeds the terms set by the imperial discourse, which only makes room for “the aggressive Westerners and those people outside of the West for whom the Ayatollahs speak” (50). Anticipating the eponymous affair, Said takes Rushdie—an author brilliantly discussed by Ana Cristina Mendes in this volume—as an example of an intellectual whose opinion is marginalized in the public debate. Rushdie’s critique of the revival of colonialism in Thatcherite Britain is disregarded, he argues, as yet another example of third-world whining, at best, or as an instance of the failures of decolonization, at worst. “I can perfectly well understand the anger that fuels Rushdie’s argument,” Said says,

Whereas we write and speak as members of a tiny tokenized minority of marginal voices, our journalistic and academic critics belong to a considerably wealthy system of interlocking informational and academic resources. This has newspapers, TV stations, journals of opinions and institutes at its disposal. Most of them have now taken up a strident chorus of rightward-tending damnation in which what is non-white, non-Western and non-Judeo-Christian is herded together under the rubric of terrorism and/or evil. To attack this is to defend Western democracies. (52)

The actuality of Said’s words in today’s post-9/11 world is astonishing. The astonishment, though, should not let us believe that intellectual work can stand apart from “informational and academic resources” of sorts. Bruce

Robbins (1993; 2002), whose afterword closes this volume, convincingly argues in favor of the professionalization of intellectual labor. Instead of being the place of oppression (an idea that in fact recreates the household as the place of freedom, regardless of the conditions there for the reproduction of intellectual labor such as gendered and racialized care work), the workplace *does* enable intellectuality. Analytically, “to conceive of intellectuals as professionals is to put critical thought in social context” (Robbins 1993, 12).

With reference to Said, Robbins detects and effectively undermines a common critique addressed to radical and postcolonial intellectuals alike: that professionalization, which for Western intellectuals is unquestioned, becomes an issue when associated to non-Western subjects—as if a professional anti-colonial critic were an oxymoron. Consequently, a higher level of detachment from the world is expected from postcolonial intellectuals, thereby producing the paradoxical belief that the most disembodied thought is taken as the most genuine. But political interests are always in play, and mundanity for Said is the precondition of intellectual labor more than its constraint. “Intellectuals,” he writes, “are *of* their time” (Said 1996, 21).

Said is not alone in reflecting on the role of the intellectual from a post-colonial point of view. But his analysis does not find uncritical consensus among postcolonial scholars. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for instance, “somewhat like Said, . . . celebrates a certain critical and historical rootlessness” (Lovesey 2016, 25), and, along with him, believes that “there is [no] extra-institutional space” (Spivak 1990, 5). But her point of departure is quite different. To the interviewer who asks: “Are you privileging exile as a vantage point on the scene of post-colonial cultural politics?” she replies: “An exile is someone who is obliged to stay away—I am not in this sense an exile” (67–68). Spivak is not as convinced as Said about the model of intellectuality being shaped around a figure of displacement. Instead, she offers an alternative account.

In “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), probably the most widely read essay of the postcolonial canon, Spivak provides a critique, on the one hand, of French poststructuralism at its peak—Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze—and on the other hand, of Ranajit Guha and the subaltern studies group. Famously, she begins her discussion on the pitfalls of poststructuralist critique by rereading the dialogue between Foucault and Deleuze in “Intellectuals and Power” (1977). From that conversation, an image of the intellectual emerges akin to Said’s portrait (1996, 85–102) of the dissident intellectual “speaking truth to power.” However, their account is further characterized by the dismissal of the problematic of representation, which marks a clear distance from Said. For him, intellectuals are responsible for “underrepresented and disadvantaged groups” (xvii) and do not shrink from the task of giving them a voice. According to Deleuze, however, the intellectual as

representative consciousness of the marginalized and the oppressed is no longer necessary because people are able to represent themselves: “representation no longer exists; there’s only action” (Foucault and Deleuze 1977, 206). Against this predicament, Spivak highlights its paradoxical nature: the French intellectual concludes that no representation (in the political sense of “to speak for”) is needed, but while doing so, he represents (in the aesthetic sense of “to re-present”) *both* political actors as perfectly conscious of their interests *and* himself as transparent (Spivak 1988, 275–76).⁴ Drawing on Marx (1976), Spivak argues that the intellectual has to attend to both meanings of the term *representation*, as well as the continuities and gaps between them, in order to be accountable for her own activity.

To be sure, Spivak does not entirely do away with French poststructuralism. She acknowledges Foucault’s and Deleuze’s major contribution towards dismantling the Western subject and conceiving of power not just as repressive, but as productive and enabling (Foucault 1982, Deleuze and Guattari 1983).⁵ This particularly applies to the figure of the intellectual, who cannot escape the power mechanisms she is embedded in and enabled by *as* an intellectual. The disagreement between Spivak and the French philosophers runs along different lines. According to her, a discourse against power does not immediately translate into an effective countering of it. What is needed is the mediation of an ideological discourse, capable of transforming disarticulated social constituencies into political subjects.

The representational function of the intellectual, in this sense, cannot be disavowed. The subaltern studies group, in Spivak’s view, recognizes this mediating role. Their very object of investigation—the subaltern—orients them toward a path “rather different from the self-diagnosed transparency of the first-world radical intellectual” (Spivak 1988, 285). But they tend to crystallize the subaltern into an unchanging object of research, whereas for Spivak subalternity emerges in the differential relation with what it is not—the elite. Thus, while she understands it as a conceptual horizon, Guha and others aim at retrieving the subaltern’s consciousness through the compilation of its lost archive and the narration of its untold story: what Spivak calls “a task of *measuring silences*” (286). For her, the intellectual should submit her desire to turn the subaltern into an object of investigation to a permanent critique, ask the question about the meaning of such desire, and only then “begin . . . to plot a history” (297).⁶

Spivak’s intervention must be read within the context of broader debates taking place in the 1970s and 1980s within Marxism and, more broadly, in the intellectual scene of the Left. In those years, intellectuals began to question the classical Marxist understanding of ideology in terms of “false representation” producing “false consciousness,” particularly by engaging with the work of Italian philosopher and militant Communist Antonio

Gramsci (wonderfully presented in this volume by Neelam Srivastava). Postcolonial and feminist critics started countering this view by affirming that those marginalized subjects who did not speak the language expected by Western Marxists were not simply the victims of ideology but articulated a discourse of their own that the intellectual must be able to listen to. Paradigmatic of this politico-theoretical moment is the very same volume in which Spivak's most famous essay was published, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Nelson and Grossberg 1988). While some—such as Foucault and Deleuze—decided to get rid of the notion of ideology altogether, others engaged in a complex process of rethinking the entire Marxist conceptual apparatus.

The work of Stuart Hall belongs to this political-theoretical moment too. A highly visible self-defined intellectual (Hall 1992), initiator of the field of cultural studies and cofounder of the *New Left Review*, Hall invested much of his energy since the 1970s in the enterprise of making audible the voices of those social groups that did not find a place within the traditional structures of the Left, in particular sexual and racial minorities. To this end, he was a leading figure of the debates in which the categories of Marxism were being entirely reconceptualized. Yasmin Gunaratnam provides a thorough discussion of and novel take on the relation between Hall, feminism and antiracism in this volume.

For Hall, ideology should be viewed not simply as the false representation of reality produced by those in power, but rather as a discursive field of struggle over representation in which the dominant and the oppressed groups confront each other on the same terrain (Hall 1980, 1983). Hence, the representational practice of the intellectual and her capacity to speak to the oppressed and *with* the oppressed become key to political struggle. Moreover, Hall highlighted the fact that new social groups were making their appearance on the horizon of the Left, deploying a new language of identity. In his view, the Left thus faced the difficult challenge of transforming its own vocabulary in order to be able to listen to such new voices. In other words, the very public sphere was undergoing profound transformations, multiplying into different and perhaps even conflicting publics that would reshape the position of the engaged intellectual.

Not only had the traditional working class been transformed by decades of welfare state policy and by the advent of consumerism, but the appearance of new social movements such as feminism, gay and lesbian politics, antiracist politics, and the peace movement (to name a few) redefined and multiplied the very space and referents in relation to which the intellectual would have to articulate her intervention. As Hall's intellectual work and lifelong commitment to social and political transformation teaches us, the question of the

relationship between the intellectual and the public can no longer be posed in the singular, if it ever could.

PUBLICS

The public sphere as conceptualized by Jürgen Habermas (1989)—as an intermediate (and mediating) space between society and the state—helps to locate the field of intellectual intervention. However, as many have argued, there is no such thing as *one* public sphere. Instead, there is a proliferation of *publics*, at least as many as the different groups in society. Such a redefinition of the public in the plural has been famously promoted by feminist scholar Nancy Fraser (1992). *Pace* Habermas, she argues, social inequalities cannot be publicly bracketed. Fraser criticizes the liberal conception of the public sphere as an idealization aimed at delegitimizing nonliberal, competing publics—or better, *counterpublics*—where sexual, ethnic, religious, and other minorities stake their claims. A study of postcolonial intellectuals is therefore an investigation of how social groups that have been excluded from the official public regain their voice in alternative arenas.

A perspective that recognizes multiple publics is particularly important when Europe enters into the picture. Before asking whether there is such a thing as a “European intellectual,” one should wonder whether there is such a thing as a European public in the first place. If there is, is it the sum of local, regional, and national publics, or does it have its own specificity? And what borders are being redrawn when someone invokes “Europe”? Can postcolonial intellectuals even be *of* Europe?

Étienne Balibar, who has been posing the question of European publics at length, proceeds not so much from a liberal understanding of the public sphere as from a critical investigation of the making of borders (Balibar 2002). In *We, the People of Europe?* (2003), he posits the construction of a European public sphere as one of the necessary conditions for the making of Europe. Similarly to Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2013), he does not make assumptions about the form and content of a European public sphere, but suggests tracking its emergence at the border points: “Is there . . . a ‘European people,’ even an emergent one? Nothing is less certain. . . . But the question must remain open, and in a particularly ‘central’ way at the border points” (Balibar 2003, 2).

This question is all the more relevant today, as the current citizenship regime in Europe only allows for a “European people” to emerge that is the result of the sum of national citizenships. When Balibar speaks of the border as the site where the question must be reiterated, he is referring to

the material borders of the continent as well as to the multiplicity of borders dispersed within it. Thus, if Europe is to fulfill its postnational promise—and, in the process, undo its colonial remains largely bound to histories of nation building—then something like a “European people” has to be understood as a project to dismantle the nation-state and put an end to colonial violence. As Engin Isin and Greg M. Nielsen (2008) suggest, rather than look at ready-made definitions of European citizenship, one should focus on the scenes where people stake claims to it (where they perform “acts of citizenship”) beyond and besides legal recognition.

But from a postcolonial perspective the project of Europe, even when revised, has to be doubted. While it is true that the colonial partition of the world was intimately connected to the drawing of borders between European nation-states, it is equally true that the post–World War II making of a European space (regardless of the current status of this project) was bound to a denial of the colonial past. As Peo Hansen argues, studies of European integration have chosen to focus on the internal rivalries within Europe and on the polarization brought by the Cold War. This has purposefully obliterated the decline of another world order—that of colonialism and imperialism. European integration became the scapegoating for the responsibilities of colonialism, and Africa came to Europe as a dowry (Hansen 2002, 493; Hansen and Jonsson 2014). Gurminder K. Bhambra (2016) reflects in particular on the ways in which contemporary intellectuals frame cosmopolitan theory. Ulrich Beck (2007) and Habermas (2001; 2009), for instance, recover cosmopolitanism based on the Enlightened Kantian model. The latter, in their opinion, is jeopardized by today’s multiculturalism. In so doing, they run the risk of supporting the arguments of those same populist parties they aim to counter. Insufficient attention has been paid to the link between the process of decolonization and that of European formation, as well as to the role that intellectuals have played in it. It is therefore crucial to contest the absence of postcolonial awareness in such narratives and to assess Europe’s postcolonial transformations, in which the holdings of the imperial past continue to haunt the present through neocolonial, xenophobic, and neoliberal practices (see Ponzanesi 2018).

These are but a few of the challenges one has to face when Europe is figured as the stage of postcolonial intellectuals. Then why should we stick to Europe? Europe, it is worth remembering, is not just the setting where a certain public, or publics, unfold(s). For some postcolonial intellectuals, it constitutes their very intellectual background; for others it is the target of critique. For most it is both. For many it is an accident in their displacements, a temporary nuisance. Far from celebrating Europe or endowing it with an alleged “exceptionalism,” this volume acknowledges its peripheral location as an appendix to the Eurasian continent (Spivak 2005; Derrida

1992). Starting from this shrunk reconfiguration, the volume traces the recurrence of Europe as a trope in the writings, thought, and life trajectories of a few postcolonial intellectuals and movements: a limited scope indeed, but one that allows us not to restage Europe, once again, at the core of a narrative.

OUTLINE

We have decided to open the book with a preface by Engin Isin followed by an intervention by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and to close it with an afterword by Bruce Robbins. The idea is to offer space to academics as intellectuals who have thought at length about the role of the intellectual, the function of postcoloniality in the current globalization model, and the right to have rights through acts of citizenship. They have all been active operators in the public sphere and engaged in contested but also highly interlinked relations with Europe and its publics.

In the preface, Engin Isin reconceptualizes the performative act of “speaking truth to power” in terms of “speaking truth *with* power,” thereby suggesting a third way to understand the postcolonial intellectual subject: neither universal nor specific, but transversal. In her “Thinking Academic Freedom in Gendered Postcoloniality,” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak continues some reflections on intellectuality she started in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), covering issues such as academic freedom, censorship, education, and gender inequalities. The thorough combination of literary analysis and development studies, personal experiences and philosophical insights, political engagement and poetic metaphors results in an inspiring read.

The core chapters are divided into four sections in order to follow the metamorphoses of the role of intellectuals according to different possible interpretations. It starts with Part I on “Portraits of the Intellectual,” which focuses on the ideas of foundational figures such as Said, Gramsci, James, Fanon, and Hall. Part II, “Reinterpretations and Dialogues,” revisits the legacy of crucial figures who may not strictly fall within the category of postcolonial intellectuals but have contributed to its development. Part III on “Writers, Artists and Activists” promotes the idea of writers and artists as having public impacts and making political interventions. The last section, “Intellectual Movements and Networks,” problematizes the notion of the intellectual as an individual figure and moves towards the understanding of intellectual labor as collectively produced through social movements, digital technologies, and different forms of activism. Obviously, these are very porous categories, and intellectuals, artists, and movements intersect with each other across the sections. Our clustering of chapters is not meant

as a demarcation, but just as signposts to indicate the different approaches that such a complex and representative (but not exhaustive) constellation of intellectuals evokes and demands. A brief sketch of the different mappings in context follows.

PORTRAITS OF THE INTELLECTUAL

The first section of this book includes chapters on Antonio Gramsci, C. L. R. James and Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Stuart Hall. To different degrees, these intellectuals have shaped the canon of postcolonial studies: an understanding of the field (and of intellectual labor in general) can hardly overlook their work. Although none of them is of European background—except for Gramsci, but in the first chapter of the book Neelam Srivastava convincingly argues for the semicolonial status of Italy’s “Meridione,” where Gramsci was originally from and which contributed to his Marxist views—they all entertained, in one way or another, a relation with Europe.

Jamila M. H. Mascot gives a spellbinding account of the European years of James and Fanon, showing how Marxism, though in its “heretic” forms, played a pivotal role in their anticolonial trajectories. This should function as a reminder for postcolonial scholars not to deprive these authors of their revolutionary potential. The European humanism underlying Said’s thought—and his latest publication in particular (Said 2004)—is no secret. Pal Ahluwalia discusses the current crisis of the humanities and the role of the secular critic in the light of Said. The contrary also holds true: Ahluwalia pays a beautiful homage to Said starting from the current status of the humanistic project. Yasmin Gunaratnam’s chapter traces the multifaceted, “conjunctural” aspects of Hall’s thought and life. At the same time, she puts him in dialogue with today’s feminist and queer of color’s formations in order to explore issues such as contemporary racisms in Europe and processes of knowledge production within the neoliberal academy.

REINTERPRETATIONS AND DIALOGUES

Most of the intellectuals listed in the second section may appear unexpected to the reader who is well versed in postcolonial debates. Here, we offer rereadings of figures who do not belong to the postcolonial canon in the strictest sense, but who enrich it if scrutinized under a postcolonial lens. Mehdi Sajid introduces Shakīb Arslān, a Lebanese prince who lived in Europe in the interwar period and whose anti-imperialistic activities and ideas reverberate with many tenets of postcoloniality. Christopher J. Lee provides a

postcolonial reinterpretation of Hannah Arendt, one of the most influential Western philosophers of the twentieth century. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1994 [1951]) and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (2006[1963]), as well as Arendt's stance towards Zionism and the Palestinian question, help readdress some of today's main concerns. Another major philosopher who is now part of the Western canon, Jacques Derrida, is the protagonist of the next chapter. While his influence on postcolonial studies, via deconstruction and Spivak, is well known, his Jewish Arab roots and his stance on the Algerian war of independence are seldom remembered. Muriam Haleh Davis critically delves into this terrain, illustrating the intersections among the personal, the political, and the theoretical. Finally, Bolette B. Blaagaard reads Paul Gilroy, author of *The Black Atlantic* (1993), along with feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, author of *Nomadic Subjects* (2011). The latter may not be recognized as a postcolonial scholar at first, but her reflections on race and commitment to rethinking the humanities align with postcolonial efforts to decenter the modern European subject.

WRITERS, ARTISTS AND ACTIVISTS

To include a section on artists and writers in a volume on intellectuals calls for a reflection on the interplay between artistic/literary works and politics—an issue that has been widely discussed within postcolonial studies (e.g., Ngũgĩ 1997; Spivak 2003). Said famously advocated having postcolonial critique unmask the imperialist project underlying certain cultural narratives—those infused with Orientalism in particular (Said 1978). “As someone who has spent his entire professional life teaching literature, yet who also grew up in the pre–World War Two colonial world,” he writes, “I have found it a challenge not to see culture in this way—that is, antiseptically quarantined from its worldly affiliations” (Said 1994, xiv). At the same time, the “relative autonomy” (xii) of the cultural field from the political and the economic needs to be acknowledged. That the connection between a work of art and reality is not unmediated is a basic assumption of postcolonial critique, yet one that needs to be recalled time and again.

The chapters in the third section explore the biographies of postcolonial writers, artists and activists who, willingly or not, have entered the political arena, and can thus be said to perform intellectual work. Ana Cristina Mendes goes through Salman Rushdie's novels from the 1980s to the present day to show how issues such as freedom of speech and secular cosmopolitanism have (accidentally) contributed to the formation of Rushdie's intellectual persona. Jesse van Amelsvoort presents writer Zadie Smith, with a particular focus on her political engagement through fiction and opinion pieces. Tindra

Thor discusses graffiti artist Banksy, and three recent works in particular that comment critically on the timely issue of the so-called refugee crisis in Europe and the UK, as well as on Brexit. Finally, Rosemarie Buikema looks through the prism of art at the Rhodes Must Fall movement in South Africa, according to which the legacies of European colonialism have to be dismantled.

INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENTS AND NETWORKS

To understand the final section we must first scrutinize the relation between intellectuals and social movements. Because of the current precarization of intellectual work and the concomitant intellectualization of social movements, it seems that today the two categories are being increasingly conflated. In a time when passions if not the very “intellectual vocation” (Robbins 1993) are being capitalized to make willful academics, writers, cultural workers, and students exploitable, the politicization of such groups does not come as a surprise. The theme of university mobilizations is precisely what Leila Whitley explores in her chapter on the influence that critical feminist scholar Sara Ahmed and students have on each other. At the same time, it is worth remembering that the overlapping of intellectuality and social movements—or better, the phenomenon of intellectual work being carried out by political groups—is far from new. Gianmaria Colpani and Wigbertson Julian Isenia discuss an instance of the *longue durée* of such interaction, focusing on black queer activists in the Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s in general, and on two members in particular: filmmaker Andre Reeder and professor Gloria Wekker.

Despite the increasing intellectualization of collectives, the link between the representational and the represented consciousness—between intellectuals and their social constituencies—is not transparent, as postcolonial theorists have extensively argued. This means that questions of *mediation* as well as *mediatization* cannot be eschewed. The current abundance of media platforms, which are increasingly available to different and often marginal social groups (Hawkins and Keren 2015), are profoundly changing the intellectual landscape. Not only can ordinary people now perform intellectual labor, but so can anonymous individuals and groups: Sudeep Dasgupta’s chapter on the Belgian-born Movement X, whose anonymous claims and public interventions are helping to reconfigure the political space of postcolonial Europe, is a good example of this. But today we cannot conceive of the media without thinking of online platforms too. While intellectuals active in such spaces seem to be more ephemeral than traditional academics (Fleck, Hess and Lyon 2008), they are part and parcel of an emerging category of transnational thinkers for whom the virtual is the new battlefield. The chapter

by Koen Leurs explores the extent to which digital “hactivism” can provide more accurate knowledge about contemporary phenomena such as migration flows in the Mediterranean Sea, and how social media (and Twitter in particular) can constitute a space of microresistance, yet not without posing new sets of problems.

The thought-provoking afterword by Bruce Robbins hinges on some of the themes raised in the book to suggest that postcolonial intellectuals are characterized by “multiple and divided loyalties,” as well as to bring the reflection one step further: How does the postcolonial critique relate to a materialist critique? Has Europe anything to add? Interventions such as Srivastava’s on Antonio Gramsci as a precursor (but still inspirer) of postcolonialism, Gunaratnam’s on the feminist legacy of Stuart Hall, Colpani and Isenia’s on queer of color collectives, and especially Mascot’s on the Marxist (heretic) legacies of C. L. R. James and Frantz Fanon—just to mention a few—prove that postcolonial intellectuals in Europe resist any attempt to be diluted in the postcolonial paradigm of discursive transactions. As Mascot states in her closing words, the challenge for current postcolonial theorists and advocates is to show that “‘postcolonial’ does not necessarily rhyme with ‘harmless.’” In conclusion, Robbins states that all European intellectuals are postcolonial, for the simple reason that colonialism has impacted the whole world; but, paraphrasing Gramsci, “not all European intellectuals *function* as postcolonial intellectuals.” This collective volume demonstrates precisely that postcolonial intellectuals are characterized by the multiple loyalties Robbins hints at, but also by the need to critically engage with the trope of Europe beyond any “accident of birth” (Spivak 1988, 281).

Let us conclude by remarking what this collective volume is *not*. First, it does not cover all postcolonial intellectuals who have had, at some point in time or space, a relation with Europe. The loose definition of postcoloniality we adopt, which allows for the inclusion of figures who do not necessarily belong to the canon, is too broad to allow for a textbookish account. Francophone authors such as Aimé Césaire, Jean Amrouche, and Léopold Senghor; African writers such Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o or Wole Soyinka; not to mention the whole Hispano and Lusophone worlds, are just some of the intellectuals missing from this book. And so are highly visible academics such as Tariq Ramadan. Yet it is our hope that those who wish to read some philosophically inflected portraits of key postcolonial intellectuals and movements will be inspired to deepen their knowledge on such themes.

Second, this volume does not discuss figures who have twisted the postcolonial discourse towards the right end of the political spectrum. Claiming a better access to issues of religion and race because of their personal experience,

outspoken personalities such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali in the Netherlands, Magdi Cristiano Allam in Italy, or Hamed Abdel-Samad in Germany, to name but a few, recover typically postcolonial tropes to support conservative, protectionist, and ultimately xenophobic claims. Quasi-normative analyses *à la* Said would hardly allow them to be considered as proper “intellectuals.” The problem, however, should not just be ignored. What constituencies do such ambiguous yet influential opinion makers address? How do publicity and visibility frame their politics? What does co-optation on the right say about postcolonial critique? This book provides some hints but does not venture into answering these specific questions.

Despite all this, we are convinced of the timely appearance and urgency of this volume. Intellectuals’ voices are always at risk of being tokenized; their positions inside and outside institutions are precarious; their words are often misrepresented or taken out of context and twisted. In an era of fake news and so-called post-truth, the engagement of postcolonial intellectuals is under even more pressure. Instead of being in decline, the role of the intellectual has mutated both in its appearance and in its authority. More than by individual figures and charismatic leaders, intellectual labor is being increasingly performed by collectives, movements, networks or even political parties, which are reclaiming the right to activism and visibility. While the advent of digital media has made the role of the intellectual more diffused, less controllable, and with much wider and fast-changing “publics” than any intellectual could have dreamed of in the past, it also poses new issues of authenticity, autonomy, and accessibility. The recent Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and #MeToo social movements are examples of wider transformations, showing that “intellectuals” in this broader sense are far from waning: on the contrary, they are multiplying, diversifying, and raging.

NOTES

1. About Nussbaum’s argument in defense of the humanities, see Pal Ahluwalia’s chapter in this volume; about Mbembe, see Rosemarie Buikema’s chapter.

2. For a more detailed presentation of Said, see Pal Ahluwalia’s chapter.

3. “I grew up as an Arab with a Western education. Ever since I can remember, I have felt that I belonged to both worlds, without being completely *of* one or the other” (Said 1994, xxx).

4. By substituting desire for interest, Deleuze concludes: “We never desire against our interests, because interest always follows and finds itself where desire has placed it” (Foucault and Deleuze 1977, 215). This, in turn, makes intellectuals unnecessary, for people supposedly desire what is in their interest. In doing so, Deleuze fails to recognize, Spivak (1988) argues, the role of ideology in shaping people’s desires, and

allegedly “reintroduces . . . the Subject of desire and power [and the] self-identical subject of the oppressed” (279), precisely at the point when he was committed to radically demystifying the Western autonomous, self-standing subject.

5. Not to mention Spivak’s appraisal of deconstruction, and of Jacques Derrida (1992, 291–94) in particular, who “does not invoke ‘letting the other(s) speak for himself’ but rather invokes an ‘appeal’ to or ‘call’ to the ‘quite other’ . . . of ‘rendering *delirious* that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us” (294).

6. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak allowed us to republish in this volume a shortened version of her lecture “Thinking Academic Freedom in Gendered Postcoloniality,” for which we are very grateful.

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