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### Towards a Spatial Practice of the Postcolonial City

Katie Beswick<sup>a</sup>, Maya Parmar<sup>b</sup> & Esha Sil<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Queen Mary University, UK

<sup>b</sup> Open University, UK

<sup>c</sup> Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

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# TOWARDS A SPATIAL PRACTICE OF THE POSTCOLONIAL CITY

Introducing the Cultural Producer

*Katie Beswick, Maya Parmar and Esha Sil*

Queen Mary University, UK; Open University, UK; Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

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**cultural producer** *This essay offers an introduction to the special issue ‘Reevaluating the Postcolonial City: Production, Reconstruction, Representation’. It institutes the cultural producer as its key reference point for reexamining the spatial imaginary of the postcolonial urban landscape. From internationally acclaimed artists, exhibition curators and marginalized performers to local audiences, tourist consumers, migrant workers, garbage collectors and transsexual pedestrians, the cultural producer is endowed with a diverse range of identity narratives by the contributions to the issue. The authors posit the ‘production of space’ as the principal conceptual axis for reevaluating the postcolonial city as represented, interrogated and reconstructed by the cultural producer. With reference to Lefebvre’s spatial theory, Foucault’s postulation of heterotopia and Soja’s understanding of the Thirdspace, this introduction explores the multiple spatial practices of the cultural producer as she/he engages with the everyday materiality of the postcolonial city along the discursive paradigms of colonial memory, national history, neoliberal hegemonies, racial struggles, gender politics, ethnic peripheries and radical sexualities. The essays in this issue foreground*

**interrogation**

**postcolonial city**

**practice**

**representation**

**space**

.....

*the spatial topography of the postcolonial city as an embodied site of the cultural producer's canonical, subversive and alternative modernities.*

This special issue of *Interventions* foregrounds the cultural producer at the centre of its enquiry into the discursive space of the postcolonial city. A key feature of the essays that follow is their interdisciplinarity, highlighting the diverse representational domains that have been revisited in order to stage an intervention into the very construction of space. To that end, we deploy the cognitive modality of space as an axis upon which the postcolonial city is pivotally remapped through the artistic, embodied and everyday practices of the cultural producer. Contributions have been drawn from a range of academic fields, including literature, film studies, fine art, curatorial practices, international relations and theatre/performance studies. In addition, the issue comprises stimulating explorations of the postcolonial cityscape by two prominent cultural producers – Panamanian playwright Javier Stanzola and acclaimed novelist Caryl Phillips.

### **The Cultural Producer and the Postcolonial City**

We posit the figure of the cultural producer as a metacritical reference point to examine how the postcolonial city has reconfigured itself in literature, culture and society as an urban space that incessantly explores its modernity along myriad conflicting lines of identity, representation and consumption. Thus, the issue redirects the predominant intellectual gaze from the postcolonial city as it shapes the cultural producer, to the cultural producer as she/he shapes the postcolonial city and its complex spatial denominations of time, history, race, gender and sexuality. To this end, the issue addresses the following questions: how do cultural producers construct the postcolonial metropolis and the spatial temporality of its urban narratives? Do they reconstruct existing colonial spaces and ideologies? Or do they produce new spaces to engage with the problematic questions of hybridity, decentred subjectivities and the popular? How do cultural industries – ranging from those of international authors, publishers and curators to marginalized entrepreneurs like garbage collectors, vagabond *flâneurs*, immigrant workers and sexually exiled storytellers – represent the discourse of the postcolonial city in both innovative and commercially viable ways? What patterns of consumption influence the production, subversion and reconstruction of the postcolonial city across local and global markets?

The connotative scope of the term ‘cultural producer’ here includes writers, artists, curators, performers, filmmakers, tourists, slum dwellers, pedestrians, racial minorities, transsexual subjects and academic researchers.

We will examine how these cultural producers implement radically different spatial strategies of creating, critiquing and problematizing the postcolonial city to reconstitute the sociopolitical temporalities along which the city is narrativized as a site of cultural production.

## The Production of Space

As a theoretical premise, the ‘production of space’ has been examined by many contemporary scholars dealing with the spatial practice of the modern-day city (Soja 1996; Massey 2005; Harvie 2009; Wharf and Arias 2009). However, the pioneering deployment of the concept can be traced back to the work of Henri Lefebvre, whose seminal text *The Production of Space* (1991), originally published in 1974, is widely attributed as catalysing the concern with the ‘spatial’ in current academic analyses of society. The shift in focus from the socio-historical to the spatial which occurred throughout the twentieth century has been referred to as the ‘spatial turn’ (Rendell 2006; Wharf and Arias 2009). This term signifies the progressive shift towards the study of the spatial, and emphasizes the critical position which spatiality has come to occupy in contemporary social theory and in wider understandings of personal, political and economic relations across spaces.

The ‘spatial turn’ has occurred as a consequence of various intellectual initiatives seeking to transpose the epistemological vantage point from such linear narratives of temporality as reflected, for instance, in the discourse of human evolution, to a concern with how society is structured through relations in spaces *across* times (Wharf and Arias 2009, 2). An acknowledgement of the spatial turn is necessary, partly because the methods of analysis implemented by spatial thinkers offer a genealogy of thought to which this issue contributes; but an acknowledgement of the spatial turn is also important in understanding the context for the significant changes in cultural practices over the past fifty years, which have mediated the modes of cognition employed by individuals to think about spaces and invent their place within them.

The ‘production of space’, as postulated by Lefebvre, is relevant to the conceptual framework of ‘Reevaluating the Postcolonial City’ because it recognizes the significance of individual perception, experience and representation. Lefebvre’s theory enables a holistic comprehension of the ways in which spaces are produced by the individuals who practise them. In these essays, we are concerned with those individuals who consciously or unconsciously intervene in spatial production via cultural practices. Such cultural producers are fundamental to an unravelling of the diverse story spaces that persistently infiltrate the discursive time zones of constructing, interrogating and reinventing the postcolonial city.<sup>1</sup>

1 The concept of the ‘story space’ has been derived from Munslow’s narrativist theorization of history as a ‘storied’ form of knowledge in *Narrative and History* (2007, 6–7, 17–24).

## The Postcolonial City as a Thirdspace

We propose the postcolonial city as what Edward Soja, extending Lefebvre's theory of spatial production, has termed the 'Thirdspace'. Drawing on Jorge Luis Borges' short story 'The Aleph' (1971), in which the author presents a limitless space unbounded by time, Soja projects his vision of a Thirdspace which can be seen to echo some of the prominent developments in spatial thinking throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first:

Thirdspace: the space where all places are one, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an 'unimaginable universe', or as Lefebvre would put it, 'the most general of products'. (Soja 1996, 56)

The postcolonial city might be mapped onto a Thirdspace via Foucault's description of 'heterotopia', which refers to a similarly unbounded space inviting multiple viewpoints and interventions. Foucault's notion of heterotopia, i.e. those spaces which are present within every society, and which act as 'counter sites' that 'represent, contest and invert' all the spaces within a culture (Foucault and Miskowic 1986, 24), demonstrates one way in which the polyvalent Thirdspace is manifest in the dynamic 'multiplicity' (Massey 2005) of the postcolonial city space. Significantly, Soja suggests that an engagement with Thirdspace necessitates a 'praxis', a 'translation of knowledge into action in a consciously – and consciously spatial – effort to improve the world in some significant way' (1996, 28). This effort to improve the world can be seen emerging via the spatial intervention occasioned by diverse cultural practices of embodying, subverting and reconfiguring the multifaceted epistemological premises of the postcolonial city.

A sustained intellectual engagement with the spatiality of cultural production is also demonstrated by such cutting-edge scholastic outputs as Jean Baudrillard's *America* (1986). Baudrillard narrates a journey through various US city spaces, engaging with the relationship between nature and the cultural producer by drawing attention to the manifold ways in which artistic, architectural and everyday spaces have impacted the postmodern US landscape. Jane Rendell (2006) highlights the influence of architecture upon contemporary art in order to demonstrate how the cultural producer inflects and mediates multiple conceptions of the postcolonial city space. Rendell illustrates this kind of work through several instances of architectural practices. These include Rut Blees Luxemburg's *London – A Modern Project* (1997) (Rendell 2006, 88–90), where the problematic gentrification of urban spaces was foregrounded by a photo series, 'Caliban Towers I and II',

documenting the demolition of local council housing at a site in Hackney that was undergoing regeneration.

In many contemporary performance works challenging the established boundaries between the disciplines of ‘art’ and ‘theatre’, cultural producers foray into the physical city environment to represent and intervene in its production: most prominently, as Nick Kaye (2000) has argued, site-specific artworks have become a method for performing site. In a number of recent performance practices, the spatial nature of social life is explored through both site-specific work and installation-based projects which often emphasize the performance space as central to the form and meaning of the piece. Companies such as Wrights and Sights, Punchdrunk, Brith Gof, De La Guarda, Slung Low, and Mapa Teatro are examples of performance collectives whose work is focused on site and who often attempt to mediate the audience experience of the city space.

### **The Cultural Producers of Postcolonial Spaces**

This issue develops its interdisciplinary scope as a discursive trajectory mirroring the multiple spatial constructions of the postcolonial city. To that end, we have instituted the subject position of the cultural producer as an interventionist foray into the heterotopic counter sites informing the perpetual making and unmaking of postcolonial space-times and their underlying structures of power and subversion. The secret and conjectured objects of Soja’s *Thirdspace* (1996, 56) assume a critical significance in relation to the essays constituting the issue.

Ed Charlton’s essay, for instance, scrutinizes the peripheral memorial legacy of the Market Theatre as a heterotopic site of apartheid resistance which of late has come to be increasingly overdetermined by Johannesburg’s amnesiac gentrification. Sibyl Fisher’s contribution, on the other hand, adopts a trans-spatial approach to examine the geocultural fluidity of Venice’s secretly conjectured Aboriginal narratives through the curatorial case study of a contemporary art exhibition, held in Venice to showcase the work of three Aboriginal women artists from Australia. An interesting symmetrical complement to these two theses of the postcolonial city is provided by Caryl Phillips’ analysis of Leeds as a city that has reconstructed itself as the ‘consumer capital of the North’ in twentieth-century Britain. Nevertheless, Leeds’ majestic Victoria Arcade and Corn Exchange, despite their current commercialization, cannot repress stories like that of David Oluwale, a Nigerian stowaway who first came to Leeds in 1949, and as a minoritized ‘other’ in the city, suffered a life of racial injustice. The radical counter-agency of Oluwale’s marginal narrative thus reinscribes postcolonial

Leeds within an elusive Thirdspace, ‘common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood’ (Soja 1996, 56).

The architectonics of our special issue is conceptualized on the spatial turn of the postcolonial cityscape effected not only by the cultural producers who are the subjects of the essays in the issue, but also by the authors of these essays as self-determining cultural producers in their own right. This occasions a metadiscursive representation of the postcolonial city as the work of a cultural producer who becomes the conjectured object of another cultural producer’s critique. The issue is correspondingly posited as a concerted attempt to reconstruct postcolonial urban modernity as a heterotopic site of self-reflexive negotiation between artistic creativity, critical interrogation and commercial mobility. Such a postcolonial heterotopia is undercut by various conflicting spaces across the temporal horizons of neo/colonial politics, architectural historiographies, popular consciousness, consumer demands and alternative racial/sexual subjectivities. These spatial interventions initiated by the cultural producer within the prevailing domain of theoretical scholarship on the postcolonial metropolis, and indeed within the larger disciplinary arena of postcolonial studies, are discussed in the following section with regard to the different essays comprising the issue.

## **An Overview of the Issue**

This issue of *Interventions*, as outlined above, analyses how the spatial topography of the postcolonial metropolis is continually produced, mediated and contested. It does so by bringing together an eclectic array of interdisciplinary contributions from practising cultural producers and research scholars dealing with the subject of the postcolonial city. ‘Reevaluating the Postcolonial City’ consists of six essays grouped into three thematic sections, followed by an essay by Caryl Phillips and a concluding conversation with John McLeod.

Section 1, ‘Artists, Disseminators and Audiences’, situates the artist, the disseminator and the audience as the focal points of what Soja’s Thirdspace would necessitate as the cultural producer’s ‘translation of knowledge’ into a ‘consciously spatial’ action of reconstructing the postcolonial city (Soja 1996, 28). To that end, the postcolonial city space is reexamined through the cognitive, embodied and everyday practices of initiating a concerted exchange between the local, global and transcultural imperatives of artistic creativity and commercial viability.

Sibyl Fisher’s essay, ‘*Fluent* in Venice: Curating Australian Aboriginal Art Beyond the “Urban/Desert” Paradigm’, critiques the discursive agency of the art curator as a (trans)cultural producer via a case study of the 1997 Venice



Biennale, *fluent*, co-curated by Brenda L. Croft, Hetti Perkins and Victoria Lynn, and featuring the work of three Aboriginal women artists from Australia – Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Yvonne Koolmatrie and Judy Watson. Fisher projects how the multi-spatial connotation of the term ‘fluent’ configures the facilitative function of the curator as a disseminator of spatial praxis by positing the global city of Venice as a polyvalent meeting ground for different cultures, in consonance with the alternative historiography of Australian Aboriginal art.

Problematizing the reductive demarcation of the colonial city in Australia into the binaristic worldviews of ‘urban’ versus ‘desert’, Kngwarreye, Koolmatrie and Watson mobilize their ‘other’ story spaces not only to challenge the commercial representation of Aboriginal art in Australia, but also to stage an intervention into the institutional hierarchy of the Venice Biennale as ‘an urban centre of the global art world’. The corresponding roles of the three curators – Croft, Perkins and Lynn – become pivotal in this regard, as they strategically mediate the distinctive yet fluid temporalities of Venice’s metropolitan locus and Australia’s Aboriginal margins, to recreate the identity narratives of Kngwarreye, Koolmatrie and Watson as part of Venice’s local lore. *Fluent’s* curatorial voices thereby disseminate the radical spatial imaginary of the foregoing art exhibition as a dynamic postcolonial exponent of Venice’s Australian Aboriginal modernity.

In his essay ‘Seeing Double: Is Old Delhi Modern?’ filmmaker and research scholar Karl Mendonca self-reflexively reviews his experimental film on Old Delhi to explore his subjectivity as a cultural producer who envisages the city’s life-world beyond the predominant Eurocentric opposition between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’. Like Fisher’s contestation of the ‘urban/desert’ dichotomy, Mendonca’s re-presentation of Old Delhi interrogates the colonial western epistemology constituting the ‘tradition versus modernity’ debate. For this purpose, he refers to a range of contemporary theoretical discussions on alternative postcolonial modernities, from those of Dilip Gaonkar, Timothy Mitchell and Bruno Latour to Jyoti Hosagrahar, Ravi Sundaram and Dipesh Chakrabarty.

Mendonca thereby deploys his film, *Dekho, Purani Dilli (Seeing Double)* as an aesthetic resource to deconstruct the ‘given’ historical time of Old Delhi into multiple heterotopic spaces of subaltern agency. Harnessing a number of cinematic techniques, including the ‘temporal-spatiality’ of slow motion, the Brechtian collapse of the fourth wall, and the narrative discontinuity of the ‘intermission’, his film engages in a metafictional encounter with the audience to unravel the ‘double bind’ of seeing Old Delhi through the prism of an ‘other’ modernity that disrupts the legitimizing chronology of the modern West.<sup>2</sup> Mendonca’s artistic practice as a filmmaker hence enables him to draw his audience’s attention to those everyday material networks

2 For a further understanding of the legitimizing chronology of western historical time as past, present and future, see Koselleck (2004, 1–5). We have also referred to Buck-Morss’s interpretation of Benjamin’s Arcades Project as a “‘ Copernican revolution” [which] completely strips “history” of its legitimating, ideological function’ (Buck-Morss 1989, x–xi).

which reconfigure Old Delhi's urban historiography through what could be interpreted as a vernacular Thirdspace of 'learning from below'.

Section 2, 'Alternative Producers, Neoliberal Practices', scans the urban poetics of the postcolonial city along the problematic spatial markers of colonial memory, neoliberal politics and global capitalist consumerism. From the anti-apartheid performers at Johannesburg's Market Theatre to Cairo's marginalized garbage collectors and unconventional western tourists, this section collates the identity narratives of alternative cultural producers in order to demonstrate how their 'other' story spaces ultimately fall prey to the hegemonic internationalization of the western capitalist market.

Ed Charlton's essay, 'From Liberation to Liberalization: Newtown, the Market Theatre, and Johannesburg's Relics of Meaning', examines the Market Theatre in the Newtown district of Johannesburg as a unique space of performance and resistance in South Africa. The creative exchange between the theatre's co-founder Barney Simon and his black cast members resulted in the production of some highly incisive anti-apartheid plays, including the famous *Woza Albert!* in 1981. Mapping the politics of Newtown's recent spatial shift from a languishing industrial ruin to the reclaimed commercial locus of Johannesburg's anti-apartheid memorialization, Charlton traces the Market Theatre's history as a heterotopic site of dissent that is being swiftly appropriated by Johannesburg's neoliberal corporate rebranding as a 'world-class city'.

Newtown's capitalist commodification into a nostalgic exponent of Johannesburg's anti-apartheid legacy serves to repress the radical agency of the district's 'material and spatial alterity' beneath the consumerist normativity of Johannesburg's gentrified globalization. Correspondingly, the neoliberal revival of the Market Theatre reifies Johannesburg's 'aesthetics of superfluity' (Mbembe 2008, 37, 41), which effectively depoliticizes the collective polemical charge of the theatre's anti-apartheid heritage, and converts it instead into a mnemonic facilitator of Johannesburg's exploitative consumption ethos. Thus the post-apartheid cultural producers of the Market Theatre, argues Charlton, need to contest the governing rationale of Johannesburg's transposition 'from the liberated to the liberalized city' in order to revitalize the theatre's postmemory as a persistent remainder of Newtown's 'unruly past', rather than a marketed relic of Johannesburg's amnesiac present.

Elisa Wynne-Hughes' 'Governing through Garbage-City Tourism: Producing International Neoliberal Subjects' critiques the spatial praxis of western tourism in Garbage-City, a slum settlement in Cairo where inhabitants collect, sort and recycle the garbage of the city. Garbage-City has recently become an urban eco-tourist attraction, promoting an 'off-the-beaten-track' ethics of responsible tourism in contrast to the essentialist trends of 'mass' tourism. Drawing on contemporary postcolonial approaches to the

disciplinary area of international relations, Wynne-Hughes demonstrates how Garbage-City's alternative tourist discourses ultimately reproduce the international neoliberal hierarchies of western consumerism. Through her fieldwork, questionnaires and interviews with the tourists, guides and residents of Garbage-City, she studies the role of both western and non-western subjects in fostering the inequalities embedded within the epistemic framework of international neoliberal governance.

Wynne-Hughes highlights how the western tourist consumers and non-western garbage workers, despite positioning themselves as unconventional cultural producers, are nonetheless complicit in perpetuating the divide between the West and the Rest. They accordingly represent Garbage-City as an 'authentic', 'untouched' community of local waste-management entrepreneurs who have been 'discovered' by judicious western tourists interested in non-western solutions to international environmental concerns. However, these non-western solutions are eventually revealed by the 'ethical' tourist gaze as the indices of 'a "true democracy" run from below' by free market forces 'in line with neoliberal logics'. As 'good' international neoliberal subjects, the foregoing western tourists naturalize the free market system as the 'real' signifier of democracy. Hence their 'alternative' tourism practices problematically contain the peripheral history of Garbage-City within the universal master-narrative of western neoliberalism. The 'off-beat' western tourist thereby commodifies the Garbage-City resident as an authentic neoliberal entrepreneur whose non-western innovations serve to reinforce, rather than challenge, the (post)colonial space-time of the western capitalist world.

Section 3, 'Pedestrian Cultures, Embodied Spaces', reevaluates the post-colonial city space from the subversive vantage point of the street walker. It posits the ubiquitous yet radical figure of the pedestrian as a cultural producer who reconstructs the postcolonial metropolis as an embodied site of resisting the normative urban assumptions of national, racial or sexual identity. The essays in this section variously envisage pedestrian artists as charismatic *flâneurs*, elusive *flâneuses*, fetishised strangers, graffiti painters, voyeuristic photographers, experimental storytellers, post-diasporic wanderers, transgendered performers and sexual exiles.

Isabel Carrera Suárez's 'The Stranger *Flâneuse* and the Aesthetics of Pedestrianism: Writing the Post-diasporic Metropolis' charts the legacy of the pedestrian aesthetic from the canonical modernist ethos of the *flâneur* as celebrated by Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin to the marginalized story space of his female counterpart, the *flâneuse*. Suárez deploys the *flâneuse's* otherness as a critical point of interrogating the disembodied imaginary of the *flâneur* as a detached, undifferentiated street observer in order to explore the sentient experience of the postcolonial, post-diasporic pedestrian. Often fetishized as a 'stranger', owing to her/his racial, ethnic or

sexual alterity, the post-diasporic *flâneuse/flâneur* revitalizes her/his peripheral body as a heterotopic site of refuting the established social hierarchies of the street.

For her primary source material, Suárez refers to a cross-section of fictional texts written by women novelists during the twenty-first century, and set variously in London, Sydney, Singapore and Toronto. These texts enable her to depict the plural spatial topographies of the contemporary pedestrian. Whether as a marginalized Eurasian woman who puts her Australian fiancé's voyeuristic camera to 'a different use' on the streets of post-Second World War Singapore, or an androgynous Vietnamese street artist who chronicles the polyvocal modernities of multiethnic Toronto, the pedestrian cultural producer proactively engages her/his 'other' body as a subjective experience of traversing the heterogeneous border zones of the postcolonial city. To apply Soja's spatial metaphor, the street is reconfigured as a Thirdspace, defiantly representing the everyday materiality of its other subjects. The embodied narrative of the post-diasporic *flâneuse/flâneur* thus inaugurates a 'resistant habit of street walking', mobilizing her/his insurgent locatedness on the street as a 'creative strategy' of negotiating the diverse discursive paradigms of the pedestrian aesthetic (De Certeau 1984, 91–110).

While Suárez's essay involves an academic analysis of the pedestrian's embodied poetics, Javier Stanziola's 'Casco Viejo Walks: Performing Panama's "Other" Sexual Space(s)' is a personal narrative, featuring his intellectual reflections on the repressed sexual voices constituting the postcolonial urban subjectivity of Panama City. Stanziola's essay projects his introspective wanderings on the streets of Panama's 'colonial neighbourhood' as a radical practice of authoring his alternative sexual identity. An award-winning playwright and self-defined 'sexual exile' from Panama, Stanziola maps his complex love–hate relationship with his hometown, performing and revisiting through his works such heterotopic sites as the 'bohemian' locality of Casco Viejo, housing Panama's most expensive real estate and most downtrodden slums. Poising Casco Viejo's rich–poor divide alongside its reputation as a homosexual underground that has cryptically archived Panama's grim history of invasions, dictatorships, drug wars and violence, Stanziola stages his peripheral pedestrian intervention within the postcolonial margins of his native city.

Stanziola's pedestrian aesthetic trenchantly destabilizes the comfort zone of the homeland via the dialectical topography of 'insile', or 'internal exile'. Stanziola cites Illanes (2006) to describe insile as a 'broken identity', caused by an alienated state of inhabiting one's own nation: 'People in insile are all around us, challenging existing narratives about what it is that brings their nation together.' Stanziola's experience of insile stems from his refusal to conform to Panama's heteronormative codes of sexual conduct, resulting in his decision to live outside Panama. As Fabricio, Vivivana, Mario or even

himself, Stanziola's transsexual street actor navigates the insiled and exiled story spaces of Panama City to employ the very act of walking through Casco Viejo as a defiant process of interrogating the 'constant frustration of being a stranger' in one's native land. Stanziola's peripheral rovers hence reconstruct the differential space of insile as an artistic resource of embodying an 'other' pedestrian ethos that mobilizes Casco Viejo as the insurgent performative site of Panama's alternative sexual imaginaries.

Section 4 begins with Caryl Phillips' short piece 'The City by the Water', based on a longer essay from his work *Foreigners* (2007). He narrates the story of the Nigerian stowaway David Oluwale, who as a 'coloured immigrant to Leeds' became a victim of the city's racial hostility. This is followed by a thought-provoking conversation between Phillips and John McLeod, and an interactive audience discussion.

Phillips employs Oluwale's memory as a pivotal reference point for navigating the spatial historiography of Leeds from its ancient times to the present day. From the vantage point of a cultural producer, Phillips reevaluates the major architectural and ideological reconstructions that the city has undergone. He thereby emphasizes the significance of the individual in the city as she/he actively seeks out its physical markers and engages with them as 'one of the most important ways' of developing a sense of history and preventing the bitter discrimination and loss of human dignity suffered by Oluwale. This interventionist engagement with the subjective topography of Leeds' colonial past generates a critical spatial praxis of reconfiguring its cultural modernity as a postcolonial city.

Phillips chronicles Leeds' spatial turn upon the temporal axis of the River Aire. The river functions as an imaginative prism through which he historicizes the dynamic narrative rhythms of Leeds' emergence from the Victorian-era workshop of the British colonial world to the pre-regeneration industrial city of the mid-twentieth century that, despite its 'urban trauma-bonding', segregated David Oluwale as an outsider. The post-industrial Leeds of the twenty-first century scarcely has the time to remember Oluwale's othered story space: in the process of hastily rebranding itself as 'the United Kingdom's Number One Clubbing city', Leeds, argues Phillips, has forgotten to include its people. The posh 'white collar residences' along the banks of the Aire embody Leeds' upmarket transformation into 'the consumer capital of the North' that has 'lost a part of its soul'.

The diurnal cycle of the river waters attests to the everyday materiality of a Leeds busy to 'spend and consume'. However, at the same time, Phillips perceives in the river's open-ended fluidity a redemptive vitality to salvage the city of its amnesiac contemporaneity, as he fathoms the depths of its waters to recover Oluwale's submerged life-world. Phillips thereby mobilizes this black migrant's individuality as an alternative signifier of the post-colonial British identity. Leeds' marginalized Nigerian stowaway becomes an

irrepressible reminder of the fact that ‘British history doesn’t stop at Dover’. Phillips thus unravels the heterotopic agency of Oluwale’s selfhood as a radical affective resource that needs to be harnessed by the cultural practitioner, whether as a writer, teacher, historian or social worker, in order to re-present the postcolonial British city through the cryptically conjectured Thirdspace of its peripheral subjectivities.

This introduction has attempted to demonstrate how this special issue of *Interventions* fundamentally reevaluates the postcolonial city via the heterogeneous spatial practices of the cultural producer. The diverse identity narratives of the cultural producer indeed become the focal point of the issue’s sustained engagement with the heterotopic counter sites of a postcolonial urban modernity. The essays constituting the issue provide an arresting range of insights into the differential space-times of colonial history, neoliberal governance, national memory, racial politics, gendered hierarchies and sexual alterities. From the self-reflexive artist and mediating curator to the tourist consumer and insurgent pedestrian, the essays traverse the polyvalent discursive premises of the cultural producer as she/he initiates a dialogic exchange with the everyday materiality of the postcolonial city. Capitalizing on its interdisciplinary focus and cutting-edge content, the issue modulates the thematic concerns of its essays to explore the embodied topography of the cultural producer as she/he envisions, subverts and reconstructs the multiple spatial imaginaries of a *postcolonial* worldview. This issue of *Interventions* thereby impacts upon the very epistemological modality of representing the city as a strategic site of intellectual analysis and research. By doing so, it aims to interrogate key debates, reinterpret cultural practices and expand the frontiers of current academic scholarship on the postcolonial city space.

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