



**Imayna Caceres, Sunanda Mesquita, Sophie Utikal, eds.** *Anti\*Colonial Fantasies/Decolonial Strategies*. Vienna: Zaglossus, 2017. 142 pp. EUR 10.00, paper, ISBN 978-3-902902-50-4.

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March 9, 2015, became a key date in the global decolonization movement. Students at the University of Cape Town initiated the #RhodesMustFall campaign, actively advocating for the removal of a statue of Cecil Rhodes from campus. For the activists, Rhodes's statue embodied white supremacy and the university's roots in and thus open commemoration of colonial violence. From there, the movement quickly established itself broadly as an antiracist and anticolonial endeavor, calling for the dismantling of oppressive systems of power governing the operational structure of the university. It also spread to other universities. At the University of Oxford, for example, students also called for the removal of a Rhodes statue. As with the advocacy of the activists at the University of Cape Town, the matter was not just a point of displacing a statue. That is, the student activists at Cape Town and Oxford, as Dalia Gebrial states, worked in the spirit of decolonization: "the goal was never to 'no-platform' or 'erase' Rhodes—it was to platform the coloniality he represented and its lasting impact in seminars, university lectures and public discourse, subjecting it to the critical scrutiny it has thus far eluded." [1] The #RhodesMustFall movement signaled a resurgence of decolonial work at universities and ushered in various intellectual, activist, and artistic projects in its spirit. Most importantly, it foregrounded past critical initiatives toward de-

colonization and articulated the global struggle against the power structures born out of colonialism and sustained in neocolonial global capitalism.

The volume *Anti\*Colonial Fantasies/Decolonial Strategies*, edited by Imayna Caceres, Sunanda Mesquita, and Sophie Utikal, stands positioned among the intellectual, creative, and activist work that emanated from this global decolonial movement. Two events are central for the volume because they frame its content. First, the volume is based on an artist exhibition and activist project the editors curated and exhibited from March to July 2016 in Vienna, Austria. The exhibition featured the work of seventeen artist activists working in various medial formats. The contributors are Black and People of Color (BPoC) and migrant students and lecturers affiliated with the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna whose work is grounded in anticolonial, antiracist, and decolonial activist and intellectual traditions. Second, the volume chronicles the petition for a Decolonial Queer BPoC Professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

Both events are intimately tied to one another. On the one hand, the volume's contributors seek, as Caceres states in the introduction, "to grasp and document the consolidation and development of a consciousness to provide historic evidence of our existence, the reflections we engage

in, and our engagement from the margins” (p. 12). In this regard, the contributors follow a mode of knowledge production centered on the personal experiences of BPoC and migrant artist activists whom the curators asked to produce or submit work for the exhibition, which explicitly grapples with the question of how they experience life in Austria, a country that “did not have colonies in Africa, Asia or Latin America—though it certainly tried—[but one that] still profited from colonialism as a European global structure, and was active in co-producing racist and colonial knowledge in ways that still have an impact on everyday life” (p. 12). On the other hand, the documentation of the petition for the professorship seeks to articulate an attempt to extend, formalize, and institutionalize the type of knowledge production the contributors to the volume espoused and performed. An excerpt from the text framing the petition reads, “We want and need a professor who knows the impact of colonialism in their body, who relates to a sound critique of racial injustice, and who discusses race not only as a critical issue, but as a body-based experience that has consequences for racialized subjects on a daily basis” (p. 27). The perspectives, commentary, and critique captured in the volume demonstrate how, when focalized through the lived experience of BPoC and migrant artist activists seeking to legitimize and produce their work in Vienna, the Viennese artistic industries and intellectual circles—which are predominantly white—are inadequately positioned to help advance decolonial work. For the editors of the volume and its contributors, creating work and advocating for the institutionalization of the type of labor they are undertaking in the form of a professorship are two approaches that have to take place simultaneously in order to secure the future for antiracist, anticolonial, and decolonial work in Austria.

One example, which exemplifies the tension between artists and the institution outlined above, is the installation “Musiq’/Breath of the Spirit” by the Guatemalan artist activist Sandra Monterroso. Monterroso describes her project as follows: “I am

in a Maya Q’eqchi’ dress walking around a space full of school desks. The word Musiq’ in Maya Q’eqchi’ language means ‘breath of the spirit,’ and I am breathing into a brown paper bag with the words clearly printed on it: ‘Racism is a colonial wound that can be healed’” (p. 62). At the core, Monterroso stages a juxtaposition between two forces. On the one hand, she holds tight to indigenous tradition and knowledge production through her clothing choice and by her blowing into the bag, an action that foregrounds the restorative power of indigenous spirituality. On the other, she is surrounded by and traverses a space ornamented with objects metonymically representing settler-colonial knowledge evocative of the epistemicide European colonizers committed against indigenous peoples throughout the world. As Monterroso continues to describe her project, she begins her commentary about the resistance she has faced working in the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna: “I have encountered problems, because the teachers said racism is not a disease that can be cured. My argument is that it is a colonial wound that cannot be cured with Western medicine, but with other forms of healing such as art, Mayan and other rituals. This colonial wound can be healed” (p. 62). By creating a venue for Monterroso and by giving her a chance to articulate the resistance she faced advancing her ideas, the volume helps perform two major functions: it articulates the violence of whiteness against non-Western systems of knowledge production and healing, while it simultaneously forms a site of resistance against Eurocentric modes of thinking, feeling, and being.

In addition, the volume chronicles previous similar initiatives and artist collectives in Austria and is thus a great resource for those hoping to learn about the longer history of decolonial and antiracist work in the country. Overall, *Anti\*Colonial Fantasies/Decolonial Strategies* is an exceptional artistic, activist, and academic text. It successfully provides readers with insight into the intellectual and interpersonal experiences of those involved in the project and is an exciting addition

to the scholarship of antiracism, anticoloniality, and decolonization.

Note

[1]. Dalia Gebrial, “Rhodes Must Fall: Oxford and Movements for Change,” *Decolonising the University*, ed. Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nişancıoğlu (London: Pluto Press, 2018), 22–23.

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