

## Editorial Foreword

**EXTENDED ENSLAVEMENTS** It is still all too common a view that slavery was a relatively uniform phenomenon that slowly but surely was dismantled over the course of the nineteenth century. There are at least three obvious mistakes in that narrative: that slavery is over, that it was uniform, and that it moved from existence to non-existence in a unilinear temporal line. The story presents a comforting teleology, perhaps reassuring us that we in the present have advanced beyond and learned from the past. It is a flattering yarn, even if clearly specious. This first set of essays points to the complex ways in which diverse forms of enslavement were in fact expanded and extended into new arenas over time, to the lumpiness of the histories of slavery, and to the varieties of enslaved experience.

In “Spiritual Pawning: ‘Mad Slaves’ and Mental Healing in Atlantic-Era West Africa,” **Nana Osei Quarshie** opens new horizons of research on mental health, madness, and slavery in West Africa. He examines how Ga shrines and ritual practices in what is today Ghana served as treatment centers for the “mad,” converting them into potentially enslaveable subjects. Quarshie traces perceptions of labor value through the bodies of the afflicted.

**Jonathan Connolly’s** contribution, “Anti-slavery, ‘Native Labour,’ and the Turn to Indenture in British Colonial Natal, 1842–1860,” investigates the extension of indentured labor systems created in the Caribbean and Indian Oceans to British Natal, South Africa. Paradoxically, antislavery movements and the politics of indirect rule contributed to the expansion of indentured labor regimes.

In “Slavery, Freedom Suits, and Legal Praxis in the Ottoman Empire, ca. 1590–1710,” **Joshua M. White** leads us into the world of Ottoman slavery. White explores how abducted and enslaved Ottoman subjects sought to regain freedom in the courts. In this first in-depth study of a series of seventeenth-century Ottoman freedom suits, White reveals the complex entanglements of “legal” and “illegal” practices of enslavements in the early modern Ottoman world.

**GOVERNING CULTURE** Nation-states have long deployed cultural projects to make and maintain boundaries of affinity or belonging, and alienation and otherness. Making “the people” depends always, in part, on marking its edges to create a constitutive outside. Each of these three essays considers the intersection of cultural processes and stateness—heritage tourism, urban design, and opera—as these forms were applied to making centers and peripheries.

**Virág Molnár’s** article, “Class Trips beyond Borders: Reimagining the Nation through State-Sponsored Heritage Tourism,” examines how cross-border heritage tourism is used in Hungarian public schools to produce the image of a purified ethnic homogeneity that extends beyond today’s borders into Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia, and Ukraine. With this “propaganda toolkit,” multi-ethnic or multicultural sites and symbols are effaced in order to mobilize nationalist sentiments.

In “*Blagoustroistvo*: Infrastructure, Determinism, (Re-)coloniality, and Social Engineering in Moscow, 1917–2022,” **Markus Lähteenmäki and Michał Murawski** delve into Russian public works projects and design aesthetics. They compare two very different deployments of *blagoustroistvo*—an archaism conveying something like “good” or “blessed” arrangement, to describe such urban projects—in the 1920s and in the 2010s. In the first period, the term carried Marxist-Leninist values like the inversion of class hierarchies and the diminution of center-periphery spatial hierarchies. In the 2010s, by contrast, Lähteenmäki and Murawski show that the cipher of the “blessed arrangement” was applied toward almost opposite objectives: reinstating class categories and restoring a colonial configuration that concentrates power at the center.

**Aeron O’Connor’s** “Opera as Critical ‘Synthesis’: Theorizing the Interface between Cosmopolitanism and Orientalism,” meanwhile, considers the world of European opera. Many Western European operas used representations of exotic others from “the East” for Orientalist reasons, to generate their own sense of superiority. O’Connor explores what happens when these European operas are adopted and performed in other places in the world, including those very “Eastern” lands exoticized and rendered hinterlands by composers. Soviet Central Asian operas in Soviet Tajikistan are shown to radically complicate the Orientalism of the West, as Orientalist tropes are interleaved with cosmopolitan aspirations and tropes, generating an ambiguous space in between.

**HIDDEN LIVES OF STATES** In “Balancing Hope and Fear: Muslim Modernists, Democracy, and the Tyranny of the Majority,” **Megan Brankley Abbas** gauges the views of Muslim modernists in Pakistan and Indonesia on democracy, and the apparent disjuncture between democratic ideals and less-than-democratic practices. The answer to the riddle, she argues, lies in a classic problem of political theory, the tyranny of the majority. While Muslim modernists hope for a democratic future, they fear a majority that will marginalize them from political power. Their actions, rather than being contradictory, are apposite to their actual political situation.

**Elliott Prasse-Freeman’s** essay, “Reassessing Reification: Ethnicity amidst ‘Failed’ Governmentality in Burma and India,” shows how indigenous peoples in Burma work with the categories applied to them by government agents. Deeply conscious of the ways they are misrecognized, they nevertheless strategically use government classifications to maneuver within the state apparatus. Prasse-Freeman describes a keen indigenous metapragmatic awareness of how nation-state labels work, and the ways they can be variously resisted or activated for desired social goals.

**Jethro Norman’s** research navigates the shadowy domain of private security work in East Africa. In “Tensions of Modernity: Privilege, Precarity, and Colonial Nostalgia among European Security Contractors in East Africa,” Norman interprets the central role of colonial nostalgia expressed by contemporary security contractors. Contractors mimic the risk-taking colonial adventurers they read about in memoirs and aim to fashion themselves in the same guise of “rugged individualists,” old-school soldiers settling the colonial frontier. Importantly, Norman shows how such mythic caricatures inform and organize both their marketing pitches to potential buyers of their services, and their actual everyday work.

We wish you happy and attentive reading!