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Introduction

It is estimated that there are over 1 billion disabled people in the world today and, of that number, 80% live in the Global South.[1] The diverse impairments experienced by the people encompassed in these statistics have a range of implications including reduced life expectancy, pain, mental distress, social stigmatisation, lack of access to education and higher rates of impoverishment. As such, disability is a crucial element to the postcolonial condition as well as to global modernity. Despite its material, psychological and discursive reach, and disabled people constituting what is sometimes called the world's 'largest minority', disability long remained a forgotten, even maligned, subject of academic research. Unlike its intersectional siblings such as race, gender and class, disability has tended to be considered a 'niche' concern and not applicable, as disability theorists have argued it is, to all those who are embodied (i.e. everyone).[2] Despite these large numbers and significant ramifications, much work still needs to be done in understanding what disability means, historically, culturally and today. This special issue is a little step on the journey of doing that work. Bringing together postcolonial theorists, literary scholars and historians, the volume intends to acknowledge the hugely formative power of disability to shape the lives of all people – those who do not identify as disabled as well as those who do. Each essay tackles this important theme with attention to different manifestations of disability including brittle bone disease, injury, muscular-skeletal anomaly, blindness and deafness. The timeframes span the mid nineteenth-century to the early 2000s.The geographical scope of the essays covers South Asia, East Asia, Latin America, South Africa and Oceania. Taken together, it is hoped that the volume contributes to a growing conversation about disability and postcolonialism.

Disability and postcolonialism: a burgeoning field

Because of the multifaceted nature of disability, it is unsurprising that disability studies is inherently interdisciplinary. Sociologists, educationalists, literary scholars, cultural theorists, philosophers and historians have produced much-needed work. From its activist beginnings in the 1980s, this work has, in many ways, had a political purpose, demonstrating disability's cultural construction and excavating the largely negative baggage with which it is laden. As Daniel Blackie and Alexia Moncrieff emphasise in the article 'State of the Field' on disability history, conferences, books, exhibitions and even book series demonstrate how fruitful disability can be as a thematic interest and an analytical tool.[3] The same can be said of other disciplines. Excitingly, there are several people working at the intersection between disability studies and

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[1] Christopher Krentz, *Elusive Kinship: disability and human rights in postcolonial literature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2022), p. 3.

[2] See for example, Lennard Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: disability, deafness and the body* (London: Verso 1995), p. 2.

[3] Daniel Blackie and Alexia Moncrieff, 'State of the Field: Disability History', *History: the Journal of the Historical Association*, 2022, 107/377, pp.1-23.

postcolonialism and so before making the case that the time is ripe for another special issue on this theme, I will briefly chart the important contributions made by work to date.

The beginnings of a burgeoning dialogue between scholars of disability and those of postcolonialism can be located in Clare Barker and Stuart Murray's ground-breaking special issue 'Disabling Postcolonialism: Global Disability Cultures and Democratic Criticism'.[4] As Barker and Murray wrote in their introduction, before this, 'silences' existed in addressing disability in postcolonial studies and, where disability was addressed, it tended to be as a 'prosthetic metaphor', rather than a subject of analysis in its own right.[5] Amongst other things (noted below), their special issue argues that, as both postcolonial studies and disability studies are essentially about power, bringing the two areas of research together produces a complexifying and important effect. As they had hoped, following Barker and Murray's publication, work on disability and postcolonialism has burgeoned. Barker's own monograph, *Postcolonial Fiction and Disability*, published the following year, was the first book-length study on this topic and explored the representation of disabled characters from a range of postcolonial sites, including Africa, South Asia and New Zealand.[6] Alice Hall has published widely on disability in relation to Global Literature.[7] Christopher Krentz's *Elusive Kinship* is another important contribution to this field. Working with the plentiful number of disabled characters in postcolonial fiction, Krentz argues that these characters 'challenge…and expand…existing theories of disability in literature developed in North America and Western Europe' as well as helping to 'create connection and care for disabled people in readers' imaginations'. The 'varied' and 'heterogeneous' disabled people Krentz mentions in his introduction allow, he argues, imaginative engagement between disabled peoples and 'the reading public'.[8] In some respects this is also the purpose of this present volume: to bring disability to mind both in terms of the elucidation of the experience of disability and the theoretical work that disability does in the creation of 'normality'.

Four arguments emerging from this literature are absolutely foundational to the current volume and might be summarised as follows. Firstly, disability is acknowledged as a recurring and important trope in postcolonial literature that needs to be better understood. Secondly, disability is recognised as an important social and cultural issue in the lived reality of many people in postcolonial nations. Thirdly, disability has been shown to have long acted figuratively for the continued eco-political subordination of disabled people. Fourthly, it has been noted by Krentz and also Barker and Murray, that disability studies and postcolonial studies have been seen as

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[4] Clare Barker and Stuart Murray, 'Disabling Postcolonialism: Global Disability Cultures and Democratic Criticism', *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, 2010, vol.4(3), pp. 219-236.
[5] Ibid., p. 219.
[6] Clare Barker, *Postcolonial Fiction and Disability, Exceptional Children, Metaphor and Materiality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011).
[7] Alice Hall, *Disability and Modern Fiction: Faulkner, Morrison, Coetzee and the Nobel Prize for Literature*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan in 2012); Alice Hall, *Literature and Disability: Contemporary Critical Thought* (London: Routledge, 2015).
[8] Krentz, *Elusive Kinship*.

related through the fact that both approaches deal with questions of power, engaging as they do with questions of marginality, exclusion, discrimination and outright persecution.[9] Again, power and shifting power dynamics are recurring themes in the present volume.

Looking from the opposite perspective, there have also been some important moves by disability scholars to engage with postcolonialism, such as through interrogating issues of race and global locality. A 2015 special issue of *Social Identities* edited by Shaun Grech and Karen Soldatic is notable in this regard. In their introduction, Grech and Soldatic point to the '(dis)encounters and anxious intersectionalities' that characterise the 'dialogic praxis' between disability and the postcolonial condition.[10] Meanwhile, Helen Meekosha has made a set of powerful interventions, including by substantiating the argument that 'the agendas of disability pride and celebration in the metropole may appear to stand in stark contrast to the need to prevent mass impairments in the Global South'.[11] This argument has been furthered by Jasbir Puar, pointing to continuing disconnection between disability rights and anti-racist agendas in the Global North.[12] As indicated by these critiques, the relationship between disability and race is also related to the discussion of disability studies and postcolonialism, importantly explored by Nirmala Everelles and Chris Bell. The latter famously observed that what we call disability studies is only really 'White Disability Studies'.[13]

The burgeoning scholarship on disability, race and colonialism is deeply uneven. Although disability is far from 'mainstreamed' in literary-focused or sociological postcolonial studies, as indicated, there is an important and growing literature in these fields. The historical discipline, including historically-focused postcolonial studies, has been much slower to take up the challenge of both conducting research on the history of disability and postcolonialism, and on working theoretically with the questions these intersections generate. Blackie and Moncrieff point to the importance of intersectional perspectives in recent histories of disability, though they also note that the study of disability remains 'centred on the global North'.[14] Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy's work on slavery in the British Caribbean is an important exception, as is research by Caroline Lieffers, Sam de Schutter and others that broadens the breadth of experiences that feed into our understanding of Disability History.[15] In bringing literary scholarship into conversation with historical work on disability, this volume intends to widen the field.

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[9] *Ibid*., p. 6.

[10] Shaun Grech and Karen Soldatic, 'Disability and colonialism: (dis)encounters and anxious intersectionalities', *Social Identities*, 2015, vol. 21 (1), pp. 1-5.

[11] Helen Meekosha, 'Decolonising disability: thinking and acting globally', *Disability & Society*, vol. 26 (6), pp. 667-682, abstract.

[12] Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: debility, capacity, disability* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).

[13] Nirmala Erevelles, *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[14] Blackie and Moncrieff, 'State of the Field', pp. 14-15, 12.

[15] Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy, *Between Fitness and Death: disability and slavery in the Caribbean* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2020). See also chapters by Lieffers and de Schutter in Esme Cleall, ed., *Global Histories of Disability: power, place and people* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

The existing work has demonstrated an appetite for the kind of conversation at the intersection of disability and postcolonial studies that this volume seeks to extend. There are several ways in which the present collection builds on existing work. First, by including historical explorations, the volume seeks to extend the interdisciplinarity of the work to date. Through analysing novels alongside historical documents, the articles in this collection help us to unpick the way in which disability functions in colonial and postcolonial thinking. Second, the intersectional approach taken to disability, where impairment is thought through in relation to race, class and gender, contributes to shifting away from the rootedness of disability studies in the Global North. Doing so will help to develop the theoretical apparatus available to explore these issues, as well as making an empirical contribution to existing knowledge. The rest of this introduction traces four themes that are reflected in the chapters to follow: disability as a site for imperial intervention; colonial regimes as generative of impairment; the intersections between disability and other discourses of difference; and the role that affect plays in writing about disability.

Disability as a site for imperial intervention
Disabled people have long been the focus of imperial intervention and actors in the Global North, including colonial regimes, charities, NGOs and religious organisations, have often presented themselves as playing an ameliorative role in treating disability and disabled people in the Global South. So-called 'white saviourism' is, whilst increasingly critiqued, still a recognisable phenomenon and disabled people are often at the forefront of developmentalist initiatives. Whilst early initiatives into colonial health tended to focus on preserving the health of European colonists during their time in 'the tropics', it was not long before a new focus emerged, in which Europeans sought to 'cure' or at any rate 'treat' the bodies and minds of indigenous people.[16]

Missionary doctors, who, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards began to be an increasingly important colonial enterprise, were one of the first such groups to construct disabled people based in the colonies as victims in need of salvation by white, Christian Europeans. Believing themselves to have a 'benevolent' religion and 'enlightened' science, such missionaries sought to 'rescue' disabled people from disability and sickness across a plethora of colonial sites.[17] Sometimes the biomedical treatments missionaries introduced were so successful as to appear miraculous. Cataracts operations, for example, were performed almost theatrically, to harness the power of the miraculous and to strengthen the association they sought to construct between their own activities and what was Providential. In other areas of medicine such as Hansen's Disease

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[16] See for example, Anil Kumar, *Medicine and the Raj. British Medical Policy in India 1835-1911* (New Delhi and London: AltaMira Press, 1998); David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); David Arnold, ed., *Imperial medicine and indigenous societies* (Manchester: MUP, 1988).

[17] Esme Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: negotiating otherness in the British Empire, c. 1840-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), chapters 3 and 4. See also David Hardiman, ed. *Healing bodies, saving souls: medical missions in Asia and Africa* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006); David Hardiman, *Missionaries and their medicine. A Christian modernity for tribal India* (Manchester: MUP, 2008).

(formerly known as leprosy) and resultant disabilities, missionaries had very limited biomedical knowledge, but were nonetheless confident in asserting the superiority of that knowledge over that of those they sought to convert. Regardless of the varying levels of medical competence in missionary hospitals, these buildings became sites of conversion. Hymns and prayers accompanied injections and operations with a complex interplay between the spiritual and the medical occurring in this form of 'healing'. When presenting such work back home, missionaries played on the language of disability metaphorically, complexifying yet further this kind of interface in their talk of curing those who were 'blind to the Light' and 'deaf to the Word'.[18]

These forms of relationship are tackled my own (Cleall's) article in this special issue on Christian missions to blind and deaf children in nineteenth-century India, Sri Lanka and China, though notably the missionary enterprises that are examined were, for the most part, not medical so much as educational in their focus. The schools and 'homes' that Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS) agents established were not intended to 'cure' blind and deaf people, but to 'civilise' and 'educate' them. In some ways, missionaries here may be seen as addressing, to some extent, disability in its role as a social construct leading to discrimination. In framing the treatment of blind, deaf, leprosy-afflicted and differently disabled populations as what Cleall has called elsewhere a marker of civilisation, European powers positioned themselves infinitely far above societies they labelled as 'heathen'.[19] For example, missionaries repeatedly told stories of indigenous disabled children cast out by their own families and societies, and rescued and educated by British Christians.

Similar relationships and tropes are also analysed in Caroline Lieffers's paper on the Palo Seco Leprosy Colony in Panama. Established as part of a modernising project, the Palo Seco Leprosy Colony was, as Lieffers explains, part of a strategy by which the US asserted its role overseas as a benevolent, if extractive, global power. Those who were to be contained within the 'Colony' whose geographical reach, daily routines and medical treatments were controlled by outsiders were, in the ways explored by Megan Vaughan in a different context, discursively (and to some extent materially) stripped of their identity makers and left to make and remake their identities under this biomedical regime.[20] In Britain, the British Empire Society for the Blind, amongst other organisations, demonstrate close links between imperialism and disability, not least in disability-focused humanitarianism being used to make imperialism palatable in the mid-twentieth century.

In thinking about the power dynamics in these colonial relationships we should also consider connections between disabled people on different global sites, rather than simply between non-disabled Westerners and disabled people from the Global South. In their chapter, Lara Kriegel

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[18] Cleall, *Missionary Discourses*.
[19] Esme Cleall, *Colonising Disability: impairment and otherness across Britain and its empire, c. 1800-1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 2022).
[20] Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills. Colonial Power and African Illness* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

and Alex Lichtenstein explore the time the famous deaf-blind American Helen Keller spent travelling in South Africa, in part to extol the powers of disability activism to disabled people there. Keller travelled from Alabama so both end points of her journey were deeply steeped in the politics of racial discrimination, in the forms of segregation in the US South and apartheid in South Africa. In South Africa, Keller visited numerous disabled people, including at large African institutions for the blind, appearing to transcend at one level the apartheid regime, and in other ways, as Kriegel and Lichtenstein explain, retaining elements of colonial era sentimental exoticism about what it meant to be African, and inflections of what might be described as a 'missionary impulse'. It is hard not to see such relationships as, in some senses, discursively 'colonial'. We might draw here on the insights of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Antoinette Burton and others in their work on the role that 'imperial feminism' played in allowing 'Western' women to use the 'plight' of their 'suffering sisters' in Britain and elsewhere to assert their own liberation and power status in a complex imperial framework.[21] Needless to say, whilst the Global North has frequently presented itself as playing an amelioratory role in terms of 'helping' disabled people in the Global South, the praxis behind this construction is very ambivalent.

Colonialism, postcolonialism and neo-colonialism as generative of disability
Underlying and crucially undermining the dominant colonial discourse, there is an argument to be made that the Global North, particularly in the form of colonial and formerly colonial powers, played and continues to play a generative role in *creating* disability in the Global South. In the first instance we might think of this in terms of colonial violence, which created disabled populations on both individual and collective scales. Although most starkly imagined perhaps in the case of Congolese rubber workers who had their hands amputated under King Leopold's rule, the perceived exceptionalism of these atrocities obscures the much wider tendency of colonialism to maim and disable intentionally. In the contemporary world, Puar argues this in relation to the Israeli state's relationship with Palestinians, in her study *The Right to Maim*.[22] Historically, there are many such examples in colonial contexts. Punishments inflicted on enslaved populations (nose-cropping, branding, whipping, etc.), for example, deliberately mutilated and disabled men, women and children.[23] Indenture, which as Jane Buckingham explores in this collection, often operated as an extension of enslavement, also created disabled populations. As Buckingham here, and Madhwi elsewhere demonstrate, the violence and brutality of indentured labour regimes rendered many labourers disabled through overwork, corporal punishment, abuse and exposure to disease.[24] There was also the direct physical violence inflicted on those disabled in wars of conquest, for example, or colonial soldiers who

[21] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', Boundary 2 Vol. 12, no. 3-Vol. 13, no. 1, On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism (Spring-Autumn 1984), pp. 333-358; Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
[22] Puar, *The Right to Maim*.
[23] Hunt-Kennedy, *Between Fitness and Death*.
[24] Madhwi, "Able", "Dis-abled," and "Invalid" Indian Laborers in the Plantation Economy of British Empire c. 1840–1910' in Cleall, ed., *Global Histories of Disability*.

fought for European regimes during global conflicts.[25] In all these cases, the numbers of those disabled are broadened if we think about psychological as well as physical impairment, not least through trauma.

Then, we might think about less direct ways in which the violence of colonialism created disabled populations. Besides those killed by smallpox, measles, scarlet fever and other infectious diseases that European colonists took to parts of the world where they were not previously seen, were those that these diseases left chronically ill or scarred.[26] These diseases, which ravaged indigenous populations demographically, had effects that lasted well beyond the initial period of colonial 'contact'. The structural violence of colonialism can also be seen in wider social phenomena. Extractive economic systems and resultant impoverishment are, for example, responsible for creating disabled and chronically ill populations on a large scale both historically and today, not least through exacerbating malnutrition. As Ray refers to in this collection, the Bengali famines are, amongst other atrocities, illustrative of some of the horrific ramifications of extractive economic policies and generated high numbers of starved, disabled and disfigured bodies, as well as, of course, high death rates.[27] Drawing on the work of the sociologist Ken Plummer, Ray argues that people living under colonialism are multiply sick, where 'one form of disability either led to another, or different forms merged with each other'. Through his analysis of a cluster of modernist Bengali novels and short stories in this collection, Ray argues that colonialism, in particular British rule in late colonial South Asia, considers the human body as a productive site of contest within the colonial social order, both in the attempt to impose Western modernity on the bodies of colonised people and in the imprinting of colonial ideology upon indigenous consciousness. In short, he argues, the high proportion of disabled characters in late-colonial Bengali fiction reflects the tendency to embody indigenous anxieties about embodied colonialism in the fictive bodies of disabled people.

Unfortunately, processes of decolonisation, themselves sometimes violent and generative of disabled populations, have not ended these processes whereby those living in the Global South are subjected to conditions that make disability more likely. The violence accompanying and following decolonisation has remained endemic in many parts of the world, which have seen long-term conflicts in which new weapons (such as landmines) have deliberately aimed at creating disability, and the use of state violence, including in some cases torture.

Ecological violence too, driven by rapid industrialisation and systematic exploitation has had devastating effects that have been felt particularly acutely in the Global South and that have contributed to the disproportionate scale of disability therein. Pollution on large scales, including

[25] George N. Njung, 'Victims of Empire: WW1 ex-servicemen and the colonial economy of wartime sacrifices in postwar British Nigeria', *First World War Studies*, 2019, vol. 10 (1), pp 49-67.
[26] Madhwi, ''Able', 'Disabled' and 'Invalid'
[27] See also Mike Davis, *Late Victorian holocausts: El Niño famines and the making of the third world* (London: Verso, 2001).

radioactive pollution from nuclear testing in the Pacific, has continuing effects. So too have other incidents of catastrophic pollution created disability. In this special issue this is explored in Misra's article on the novel *Animal's People* (2007) by the British-Indian author Indra Sinha, in which a fictitious Indian city named Khaufpur (literally in Hindi 'terror-province') and a young man, 'Animal', who, like many in this city, has been profoundly disabled by poison leaking from an American factory, are used to explore the Bhopal gas disaster of 1984. As Misra argues, the 'people of the Apokalis' evoked in *Animal's People* can be read more widely to represent the relationship between the postcolonial nation and multinational corporations, many of which have their financial powerbase invested in the Global North and, through these associations, the continuing neo-colonial relationship between different global sites, not least when it comes to creating disability.

A related framework through which to explore these discussions of colonialism, postcolonialism and neocolonialism is that of capitalism, which we can see as integral to many of the articles here, including in the forms of industrial capitalism, racial capitalism and neoliberalism. In both the British and American historiography, there is a long tradition of linking the development of industrial capitalism with the creation of modern notions of disability. The disability activist Roddy Slorach has argued that disability is 'a very capitalist condition'.[28] The argument is that industrial capitalism both disabled (including through factory and mining accidents) and, at the same time, in requiring normative bodies to operate machinery, a new insistence on punctuality, and more rigidity in the nature and conditions of work, relied more heavily on, bodies and minds than pre-industrial labour regimes.[29] Essentially, these new systems were more disabling to people with, say, mobility difficulties, visual impairments, deafness, neurodivergence or mental distress and thus might be seen to have 'created' disability in its modern sense. In the case of the US, a related argument has been made by Sarah F. Rose in her excellent study *No Right to be Idle,* which illuminates the emphasis industrial capitalism placed on the 'interchangeability' of bodies needed to labour at machines from the nineteenth century onwards. Work that analyses the Global South has the power to complicate such narratives.[30] For example, Buckingham's article in this collection demonstrates how the inclusion of systems of indenture and systems of slavery 'qualifies the tendency in disability history to link modern constructions of disability to Western industrialisation and the emergence of a European white working class fit for urban factory work'. In other words, the periodisation is complicated. Such an argument links with other recent work on racial capitalism, which, in its emphasis on the importance of regimes of race in creating the modern world, has important implications for the study of disabled people.

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[28] Roddy Slorach, *A Very Capitalist Condition: a history and politics of disability* (London: Bookmarks, 2016).
[29] Michael Oliver, *Understanding Disability: from theory to practice* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2009). For a summary of the argument see David Turner and Daniel Blackie, *Disability in the Industrial Revolution: physical impairment in British coal mining, 1780-1880* (Manchester: MUP, 2018). See also Kirsti Bohata, Alexandra Jones, Mike Mantin and Steven Thompson, *Disability in Industrial Britain: a cultural and literary history of impairment in the coal industry, 1880-1948* (Manchester: MUP, 2000).
[30] Sarah Rose, *No Right to be Idle: the invention of disability 1840s-1930s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

Aside from the physical and psychological creation of disability by colonial, postcolonial and neo-colonial regimes discussed above, colonial regimes and capitalist systems can also be seen to have introduced categories of difference discursively. Whilst, as it often appears in Western discourse, disability is naturalised as self-evident, this, as disability scholars have demonstrated, is a discursive construction that imposes a binary opposition between disabled and non-disabled on complex and fluid continuums of human experience.[31] Postcolonial perspectives, or those looking beyond the 'Western' experience all too often taken as 'the norm', are highly instructive in illuminating this discursive element of the representation and experience of disability. The historian and anthropologist Julie Livingston's seminal work on Botswana is an extraordinary example of this, demonstrating that many Western assumptions about 'debility'' (blindness as disabling, for example), are just that – assumptions that do not necessarily hold true when taking a global perspective. Drawing on Livingston's work as well as his own research, Sam de Schutter has argued of mid-twentieth-century Kenya that we might see a 'colonial invention of disability' whereby certain conditions (an inability to do physical work, for example) were recast as impairment.[32] If, as de Schutter argues, disability in North America became increasingly linked to so-called idleness, so too did renewed Western and developmentalist focuses on productivity bring new ways of conceptualising disability to the Global South.

Languages of difference: disability's intersections
As all this demonstrates, disability is a shifting, fluid and contested marker of difference. Postcolonialism provides a useful language through which to explore this and the relational slippages disability signifies, as disability provides a language to think through core postcolonial categories such as race and gender. As a culturally constructed category, disability is also a complex relational category that interrelates in complicated and changing ways with other intersectional categories such as race and gender. The intersectionality between race and gender is widely recognised amongst theorists of disability (if not theorists of race), though the exact nature of the relationship is interpreted differently.[33] The disability theorist Dan Goodley, for example, points us towards the importance of 'racialised conceptions associated with the 'Orient'' in the contemporary west including in infantilised representations of disability such as stereotypies of the person with Down Syndrome as 'innocent, happy, smiley and simple'.[34] From an historical perspective, Douglas Baynton, for example, discusses the use of disability as a 'language' through which to justify 'inequality' in the US. For example, he explores the way in which 'weakness' and intellectual disability were used to disenfranchise women and people of

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[31] Dan Goodley, *Dis/ability Studies: theorising disablism and ableism* (London: Routledge, 2014).
[32] Julie Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Sam de Schutter, 'The Colonial Invention of Disability: Rehabilitation and Development in Kenya, c. 1940-1970' in Cleall., ed., *Global Histories of Disability*.
[33] See for example, Kim Q. Hall, ed., *Feminist Disability Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).
[34] Goodley, *Dis/ability Studies*, p. 46.

colour.[35] In my monograph *Colonising Disability*, I have attempted to build on this in the case of the British empire to argue that placing race and disability in the same analytic frame is fruitful because not only were race and disability reconfigured as their 'hard' modern forms in the same moment, a mid-nineteenth-century moment that saw a 'hardening' of attitudes across the British empire, but they were often articulated using the same language, that of difference.[36]

In this special issue, Buckingham takes this line of thinking further to make an argument about what she explicitly calls 'the disability of race'. Going much deeper than earlier metaphorical constructions of, as Leonard Kriegel put it, 'the cripple as negro', Buckingham proposes that 'the racial specificity of labourers selected for indenture signals the contribution of race to the constitution of disability in colonial plantation contexts.' As she goes onto elaborate, under both enslavement and indenture, 'the human body was identified as fit and able on the basis of capacity to perform arduous manual labour. However, the vulnerability to selection as able bodied within this labour system was based on identification of particular racial groups as having particular suitability as labour.' Going on to expand on Newton and Kennedy's findings in regards to enslavement, this article, by taking these arguments out of the context of enslavement and into that of indenture, opens up the possibility that race and disability are heavily entangled in colonial thinking much more widely.[37] Her argument that 'race functions as a disabling condition, creating vulnerability to servitude' will be instructive when exploring other forms of imperial service and subjugation.

From literary rather than historical standpoints, in separate contributions to this collection, Subhadeep Ray and Asis De widen this exploration of the intersections between race and disability to include gender, class, caste, and nationality. As Ray puts it, '[c]olonial rule dramatises corporeal differences', and 'the very ambiguous position of a disabled person particularly in the subaltern historical block unsettles the gradual integration of subject bodies into the colonial organisation and exposes the moments of anxiety in the history of modernity and domination.' Put differently, the bodies of disabled people, seen as 'deviant', had the power to subvert and defy the usual patterns of colonial positioning. The moments of anxiety to which Ray refers speak in part to the anxiety that is often held in the body of the disabled person. As several disability theorists have argued, ideas about loss, dependency and the uncanny are often projected onto the bodies of disabled people and their literary representations.[38] As Ray explores, this moment of anxiety can be productive in colonial and postcolonial fiction, unsettling expectations and forging ruptures through which new identities might be reasserted. In

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[35] Douglas C. Baynton, 'Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History', in Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (eds), *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 33-57.

[36] Cleall, *Colonising Disability*.

[37] Stefanie Kennedy and Melanie J. Newton, 'The Hauntings of Slavery: Colonialism and the Disabled Body in the Caribbean' in Shaun Grech and Karen Soldatic (eds), *Disability in the Global South: The Critical Handbook*, (Cham: Springer, 2016), pp. 379-391,

[38] Magrit Shildrick, *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity and Sexuality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009).

Tarashankar's fiction, caste also feeds into this complex picture. Meanwhile, in his exploration of Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* (1990), De points to the multi-layered construction of marginality in the identity of the semi-autobiographical novel's protagonist Brit, an adolescent with brittle bone disease. Brit's disability operates in conjunction with his Parsi identity, his homosexuality and his youth. In a sense, Brit seems to embody outsiderness, but at the same time, his powerful narrative voice, and statements such as "I liked being different from most people" point towards a subversion of these assumptions and the power of difference to operate as resistance.

Class too is a highly important category of difference and again intersects with disability in important ways, not least through the correlation between high rates of disability and economic poverty. The extreme poverty represented in *Animal's People* is both causative and resultant of impairment. Poverty also features in the role performed by missionaries in Chinese, Indian and Sri Lankan contexts, whereby many disabled children recruited to the mission had, before their encounters with the missionaries, been street beggars. The relationships with indenture that Buckingham discusses are structures of economic hierarchy as well as forms of colonial control.

Putting the literary and the historical articles in this collection in conversation with each other in this regard is tricky and to some extent requires a careful analysis of issues around the figurative use of the language of disability, including disability being used metaphorically to represent a nation or state experiencing socio-economic or political disempowerment, and metonymically whereby disabled characters represent the 'disablement' of an entire nation, or part of it: Brit in De's analysis, or various characters embodying national 'fragility' in the Bengali short stories analysed by Ray. Part of the difficulty here is that it is not simply a case of writers using disability figuratively and historical actors using it literally. Indeed there are very long histories of disability being used metaphorically in Judeo-Christian thought (think, for example of the famous passage in Isaiah: 'We grope for the wall like the blind; we grope like those who have no eyes'), and these metaphors were applied literally by various colonial actors, including Christian missionaries, who saw their philanthropic work with blind people as an opportunity to bring spiritual enlightenment. Such ideas are traced in the article on missionaries in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Asia, and can also be seen in the mid-century rhetoric of Helen Keller during her visit to South Africa. Similarly, comparison (including the comparison between disabled people and minoritorised ethnicities, or ethnicities dominant in the Global South) was also a crucial means through which the categories of race, gender, disability, class, caste and nation were all fleshed out, codified and understood in the modern period. Disentangling these connections is complex and requires more work to be done, but putting literary scholarship in conversation with traditionally 'historical' disciplinary endeavour is part of this process.

Disability, Postcolonialism and the Affective Connection

A postcolonial lens can be used to challenge assumptions made in (Western, Anglophone, or Global North-centric) disability studies. In the Bengali modernist literature Ray explores, the specificity of the nature of the colonial encounter, which positions the human body as a productive site of contes within the colonial social order, means that they are layers to the figure of the disabled character in a literary context, not found or found differently in the main canon of disability scholarship. In particular, the texts Ray explores 'conflate multiple forms of marginalisation of subject bodies to explore several socio-historical cross-sections, and address the question of identity formation in a highly complex colonial context'. The texts go beyond discussions of 'narrative prothesis', which, following the coining of the term by David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, is a staple part of disability-based disability theory in the Global North, forming new intersections between the embodied, socio-economic and political position of disabled people.

Another example of the way in which colonial and postcolonial perspectives can be used to challenge assumptions about disability in the global north can be seen in Buckingham's article. Buckingham argues that indenture (and systems of enslavement on which it built) 'qualifies' and complicates the narrative, often repeated in British and North American disability history, to draw a correlation between 'modern constructions of disability to Western industrialisation and the emergence of a European white working class fit for urban factory work'. In Fiji (and it might be extrapolated, other colonial sites where systems of plantation indenture were used), long-standing patterns of racialised ideologies concerning the relationship between work, 'fitness' and race ensured both that disability was a frame through which these workers were viewed as well as materially commonplace on the plantation, not least as created through colonial violence. Amongst other things, this changes the periodisation and nature of historical arguments about 'modernity', 'disability' and colonialism.

There is also the way in which this analytical, historical and theoretical work feeds into disability activism and rights-based activity either in the period specific to the analysis, or in the twenty-first century. The power of disability, both to disrupt and to resist colonial projects, is important. As Ray argues, disabled people, who in their embodied states, deviate from colonial codes of normalcy', disrupt the 'fit'/'unfit' binary, and are means through which to articulate cultural agency. That many of the pieces of fiction that Ray develops were written in the period of increased nationalism, and prelude to Independence, demonstrates the political power of such formulations.

A new element to which I hope this special issue will connect is the way in which 'affect' operates in postcolonial writings about disability and indeed at the intersection between postcolonial and disability studies. Disability is a state that is usually read as highly emotionally charged. As literary scholars of the nineteenth century, Martha Stoddard Holmes and Mary Klages have argued of Britain and the US respectively that emotion has long been a key way of

framing the lives of disabled people.[39] As Stoddard Holmes puts it, '[d]isability is melodramatic machinery, a simple tool for cranking open feelings, and everyone involved – disabled and nondisabled, viewers and actors – is somehow placed and defined by what floods out.'[40] Or, as Klages argues, through a discourse of pity, disabled people have served as 'silent spectacles, images to be viewed by the non-disabled, whose importance has been their ability to appear pathetic and to produce a sympathetic or sentimental response in non-disabled people'.[41] Social scientists have demonstrated that this emotion also applies to the presentation and reception of (real) disabled people whose lives and bodies have also been used to elicit emotional responses and who often find themselves recipients of what psychologist of deafness Harlan Lane famously described as a 'mask of benevolence', directed towards their 'plight'.[42] Colonial and postcolonial relationships were also frequently viewed with similar emotional overtones where indigenous people and people of colour were to be pitied (as well as feared), and depicted as dependent, most canonically formulated as a 'white man's burden'. When these two emotional fabrics of disability and colonialism were layered on top of each other, it is hardly surprising that disabled people in colonial and postcolonial contexts exist within a complex tapestry of affect.

The archives and publications of CEZMS are one resource with which to look at affect, laden as they are with emotive content. The deaf and blind children at these missions are represented in emotional terms, but the missionary responses to these children are also full of affect. Further, such writings were expected to elicit an emotional response from the British readership 'back home'. Pity and pathos structure missionary accounts: even ordinary everyday activities evoke tears just by virtue of being performed by disabled children. The height of the trope of pathos was perhaps the narrative of the 'good death'. Such accounts, although individualised, always confirmed the child's conscious prayer for their sins to be forgiven, affirmation of their belief in a Christian God, and a demise with no reference to pain or fear. This is very in keeping with Victorian accounts of a 'good death', which seem here to have lingered well into the inter-war era. From a related perspective the missionary work was expected to elicit an emotional response from visitors to the mission, to be used as a galvanising tool for future work. '"I sat and wept"', recalled one visitor, '"as I heard a lovely song sung in a blind school" … "Fool I exclaimed as I sprang to my feet, why thus sentimentally weep over happy and taught ones! There are hundreds of thousands in heathen lands who might thus be trained and taught!"'[43] Here, emotion is explicitly used as an imperative to action, to join the work of blind education.
Whilst missionaries produced the kind of writing in which affect was often foregrounded, in her article in this special issue, Lieffers notes that 'the rational, modern project' was also an

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[39] Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction: physical disability in Victorian culture* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2003); Mary Klages, *Woeful Afflictions: disability and sentimentality in Victorian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

[40] Holmes, cited in Cleall, *Colonising Disability*, p.40.

[41] Klages, cited in Cleall, *Colonising Disability*, p.40.

[42] Harlan Lane, *The Mask of Benevolence: disabling the deaf community* (San Diego: DawnSign Press, 1999).

[43] S. S. Hewlett, *They Shall See His Face. Stories of God's Grace in work among the blind and others in India* (Oxford: Alden and Company, 1898), p. 9.

'emotional one', a point that resonates in the articles both by Lieffers herself and by Ray. In her exploration of the Palo Seco Leprosy Colony in Panama, an institution established, as she puts it, as part of the apparatus of American imperialism, affect is heavily instrumentalised. If any disability stands out as a particularly dense site for the emotional investments discussed above to play out, it is Hansen's Disease. With its ambivalent religious symbolism running from its punitory associations in the Hebrew Bible to the positioning of sufferers as peculiarly worthy of Christ's attention in the New Testament, those with Hansen's Disease evoked an emotional response in 'western' thought. As Lieffers eloquently articulates, this meant that Palo Seco was 'a kind of emotional contact zone where managers, commentators, and residents negotiated the effective scripts and sentiments of their imperial encounter.' The framework she draws up of affective containment and affective spillage can be taken more widely as a theoretical basis to investigate disability in colonial and postcolonial thought. Importantly, this enables us to attend to the emotions that defied the scripts imposed on indigenous people, such as anger and frustration, and their tendency to deviate from the expectations of gratitude forced upon disabled and chronically ill recipients of missionary, humanitarian and state-led healthcare. It also allows us to approach the relationships forged between different Hansen's Disease patients in this institution and the importance of these relationships of care in forging lasting relationships that had the power to subvert or resist colonial projects. To some extent, such findings are echoed in Ray's discussion of the powerful ways in which disabled people are depicted in modernist Bengali literature, with bodies that evoke, amongst other things, pity, fear and revulsion. As Ray argues, the 'mutual dislocations' held in literary representations of disabled men and women help to unearth other histories of subalternity, underpinning the 'project of colonial modernity'.

The article on Helen Keller too evokes something of the 'hearts and minds' imperative of Keller's journey. Keller elicited an emotional response from those she encountered, drawing large and enthusiastic crowds for whom she operated as a 'human connotation' for the causes of blind, deaf and deafblind rights. And, as Lichtenstein and Kriegel write, Arthur Blaxhall, who organised the trip Keller made to South Africa, was '[g]rateful for the feelings that Helen stirred and for the attention to the cause that she brought, he likened the visit to 'the sudden crash, flash and downpour of a summer storm,' opening hearts, minds, and wallets'. Again, when considering these examples, we need to keep in mind the complex relationship between literary and historical approaches, and the potential power of interdisciplinary postcolonial studies to tackle some of these complexities. We might note, for example, how far Helen Keller was informed about the state of 1950s South African experiences of disability, and indeed South Africa more generally, not only by her encounters in contemporary Southern Africa, but by her reading of Alan Paton's novel *Cry the Beloved Country* in inspiring her to action. Alternatively, we might approach such questions by thinking about the non-neutrality of various primary sources, of the CEZMS articles, and indeed the colonial archive itself, as being shaped for specific readers, like literary texts. Attempts to decolonise disability must draw on a range of methodologies for bridging the gap between historical source and literary text, not least because

of the way in which disabled people, both 'real' and imagined, tend to be encountered through a series of emotional short-circuits, whereby disabled people in 'real life', in the internal world, and in fiction, are ascribed 'weakness', 'fragility' or monstrosity'. Such manoeuvres lie behind discussions of what the postcolonial theorist Ato Quayson discusses as the 'crisis of representation' around disability in the postcolonial novel.[44] As the anonymous peer reviewer of this Introduction has very helpfully pointed out, these developments in the postcolonial sphere, are resonant of the strong connections drawn (primarily in Euro-American histories/literature) between disabled veterans and the state of the nation in the aftermath of war.

Conclusion

Disability, the social and cultural construction of impairment, is increasingly recognised as a major category of difference that structured the colonial world and has continued to shape the politics of decolonisation and postcolonialism. Because of the metaphorical resonances of disability, used so often to evoke insufficiency, limitation, fragility, loss and brokenness, the language of impairment has been used to describe the postcolonial nation. The tremendous damage caused by colonialism not only to individuals but states, polities and nations across the world has been conceptualised through the language of disability, through 'crippled' nations, 'maimed' economies, and 'stunted' political institutions.[45] Such metaphors build on colonial metaphors that structured the colonies as incapable of self-rule. The language of femininity, siblinghood and weakness – all of which interact themselves with the language of disability – was mobilised to justify exclusion from power.[46] However, whilst many articles in this special issue engage with metaphorical constructions of disability, the collection as a whole is intended to go beyond the figurative to make three interrelated arguments. First, that disability, both in terms of a lived experience and as a discursive tool, has played a formative part in the psyche of post/colonialism. Second, that we need to examine disability if we are to take the intersectionality of race, gender and class seriously, because disability was mutually constitutive of these other categories. Third, some of the articles demonstrate how analyses that originate in the Global South challenge some of the narratives about disability that have arisen in the Global North, and that have then been extrapolated out as though their findings are universal. Buckingham's challenge to the periodisation of the relationship between disability and industrial capitalism is an example of this, as is Ray's assertion that staple concepts of disability theory in the Global North, such as ideas about 'narrative prosthesis', do not fully capture the complexity of marginality conjured by twentieth-century Bengali disability fiction.

Methodologically, several articles have sought to foreground disabled people's voices, be that those of world-famous disabled people such as Helen Keller, or those whose voices have to be found by reading colonial and missionary archives against the grain. Further, one of the innovative features of this volume is its interdisciplinarity. In placing 'real' historical examples of disabled people alongside literary depictions of disability, we challenge the reader to think

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[44] Ato Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness: disability and the crisis of representation* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2007), pp. 15-31.

[45] For a critique of this language see Mark Sherry, '(Post)colonising Disability', *Wagadu*, 2007, vol. 4, pp. 10-22.

[46] For this in a US context see Baynton, 'Disability and the Justification'.

across both genres and disciplines. Sometimes fact and fiction merge through the symbolic, not least because disability has been widely recognised as over-determined.

This special issue is intended as a contribution to a dialogue and an intervention in this burgeoning scene rather than as a parting shot or final conclusion. There is, of course, much more to do. The articles in this volume have tended to focus on physical and sensory disability: deafness, blindness, osteo-anomaly, those mutilated punitively, or congenital impairments generated by the poisonous effects of pollution and disaster-capitalism. One way of extending this work would be to look at cognitive and psychological impairment, including that of emotional distress, not least that caused by the trauma of colonialism. Nonetheless, it is hoped that this special issue is useful in interrogating what disability means to postcolonial studies and in its arguments that the human body and mind are crucial to understanding the colonial and postcolonial worlds, how lives are led, and how others are denied.