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**Unhomely Empire: whiteness and belonging, c.1760-1830**, by Onni Gust, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, xi + 248pp., £85.00/\$116.15 (hardback), ISBN 9781350128514

As the second publication in Bloomsbury's new series, 'Empires' Other Histories', *Unhomely Empire* is an engaging and elevated analysis of the transformation of ideas of 'home' and 'exile' in elite British Imperial thought from the high period of the Scottish enlightenment to the consolidation of liberal imperialist thought in the 1830s. It traces the influence of enlightenment philosophy through imperial and discursive networks across borders and oceans from the lecture halls of Edinburgh University to the plantations of Jamaica and the East India Company offices in Bombay. In doing so, *Unhomely Empire* demonstrates the increasing interconnectedness of Britain and empire by the turn of the nineteenth century.

The book's structure complements its two dominant themes: centralising the idea of whiteness and belonging in the intellectual history of Scottish enlightenment thought and examining the lived implications of these ideas in Britain and the empire. The first two chapters focus on knowledge creation by members of the Scottish Enlightenment elite. Specifically, they trace Smith and Stewart's construction of non-white bodies as lacking in emotional attachment and ability to act as agents of their own 'progress'. Taking a journey into Scottish intellectual history, these chapters provide a solid grounding for readers unfamiliar with enlightenment theory. The subsequent chapters provide examples of the lived experience of these theories. Spanning the Scottish Highlands, the Americas, and the Indian subcontinent these chapters offer a rich and varied analysis of the meaning and significance of 'home' and 'exile' as well as demonstrating the cross-imperial foundations of the book.

The construction of home, both intellectually by thinkers like Stewart and Smith and practically by those Britons 'exiled' abroad, became to be associated with permanence, settlement, family, belonging, and in turn morality and capacity for agency. In turn, these ideas became racialised, increasingly divided between European and non-European; white and non-

white. Those who were removed from their home, through choice or force, were therefore under threat of moral and racial corruption. For anti-slavery writers, Maria Graham and Maria Edgeworth, it was the loss of homeland and family endured by slaves, rather than their lack of freedom, which warranted pity and anti-slavery sentiment. In their writings, these women posited the creation of familial units of freed slaves, providing them with a place of belonging. In doing so, the humanity which slaves lacked as a result of their exile would be restored, while their adherence to white constructions of belonging shored up white supremacy. Equally, for those Britons in India exiled from their homeland, the preservation of ties to Britain through domestic performance and continued reinforcement of their 'Britishness' through personal writing and behaviours provided assurance of their morality. Finally, for Scottish Highlanders and the Earl of Selkirk's emigration scheme, the debate around their sense of belonging and position in Britain's imperial future led to the recasting of the community from 'backwards and barbaric' to 'brave and patriotic, white settler colonist' (81). Through their exploration of these diverse communities, Gust is able to utilise an array of rich cultural material; poetry, political pamphlets, travel writing, philosophy, letters and diaries, and literature, accessing a host of voices and exploring the extent to which these ideas permeated the elite literati, colonial networks and British public consciousness more broadly.

Evident throughout *Unhomely Empire*, is the irony that the idea of 'home' as a moral imperative was configured and disseminated of British men and women whose own lives were defined by wandering. The explosion of 'imperial careering' to borrow Lester and Lambert's phrase led a generation of wanderers who thought and wrote of 'home' continuously. Gust writes, 'the messy realities of their home lives did little to undermine this narrow 'ideology' of home' (154). But perhaps, this is the crux of the argument. The instability, alienation and exile that life in the colonies brought to many Britons had to be combatted and controlled. Creating and perpetuating fixed ideals of 'home' based on white, British frameworks quelled these fears,

if only temporarily. Empire could remain the ‘other’ and a metaphorical distance maintained. In doing so, Britons denied the possibility of alternate forms of belonging to millions of non-white communities whose traditions and experiences diverged from this model. *Unhomely Empire* offers tantalising glimpses of how enlightenment ideas of belonging were received and interpreted by these non-white communities across Britain’s expanding empire. However, it stops short of an in-depth analysis – a conscious choice Gust given the already large scope of this project. More exploration of these subaltern’s experiences is needed, and while beyond the scope of Gust’s writing, *Unhomely Empire* opens the way for future research.

Prefaced by a well-balanced introduction and concluded with thoughtful contemporary implications of the research, *Unhomely Empire* is a well-balanced, approachable study for those familiar and unfamiliar with the topic. Its publication is certainly timely. Published in a year when systems of race, gender and class have been challenged globally, this work feels weightier. In their willingness to engage directly with questions of white supremacy, tracing its origins to the moral philosophers of the enlightenment, Gust had firmly placed these central figures in public consciousness. In their willingness to unabashedly address the racist and gendered core of many western philosophical keystones, Gust has encouraged others to rethink these legacies and joins scholars like Cecily Jones and Simon Gikandi in their critiques of history and whiteness.

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