COSMOPOLITICS PAST AND PRESENT: GLOBAL ACTIVISMS AND THE DYNAMICS OF RACE, FAITH AND AFFECT
Introduction

This Friday evening public lecture and Saturday one-day symposium has been conceived in a political environment highly hostile to cosmopolitanism. The current British Prime Minister has dismissed those who claim to be citizens of the world as citizens of nowhere. Anti-immigrant, Islamophobic and racist political groups are on the rise across Europe, the USA, Australia, and beyond. In this context, we set out to bring together an international group of historians and sociologists in order to explore cosmopolitics, past and present. Our focus is on cosmopolitanism as an activist positioning which can challenge racism and nationalism, promote inter-faith dialogue, and foster affective communities and practical co-operation across cultural differences and national divides.

The aim of the public lecture and symposium will be to illuminate how a deeper historical understanding of cosmopolitics and cosmopolitan activist networks might inform and enrich contemporary debate through nuancing or destabilising received ideas. Building on recent work in this field, most recently in *European Cosmopolitanism: Colonial Histories and Postcolonial Societies*, edited by Gurminder K. Bhambra and John Narayan (Routledge 2017), we set out to bring into dialogue a range of cosmopolitics relating to a diversity of interlinked localities, with a particular but not exclusive focus on Australia, the Indian subcontinent and Britain.

To this end, the symposium sets out to:

- Explore the relationship between the religious and the secular dimensions of cosmopolitanism.
- Consider the relationship between ‘liberal cosmopolitanism’ and alternative or vernacular cosmopolitanisms, with particular reference to issues of race and racism.
- Examine the affective dimensions of cosmopolitan activist networks, particularly the role of friendship in sustaining collaboration across difference.
- Develop transnational and trans-disciplinary connections between participating scholars and thus provide intellectual groundwork for an international scholarly network on ‘Race, religion and emotion in transnational activist networks’.

Planned publication outcome:


Convenors:

Clare Midgley *Sheffield Hallam University* C.C.Midgley@shu.ac.uk
Fiona Paisley *Griffith University* f.paisley@griffith.edu.au
Cosmopolitics Past and Present: Global activisms and the dynamics of race, faith and affect

This conference is a key outcome of an ARC research project, ‘Beyond Empire: transnational religious networks and liberal cosmopolitanisms’ led by Jane Haggis Flinders University and with Margaret Allen University of Adelaide for which we have been awarded an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant for three years. Additional funding for the symposium has been secured from Griffith University, Sheffield Hallam University and Flinders University.

The Symposium at a glance

**Friday 1st December**

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<td>ARC project participants’ private meeting</td>
<td>Charles Street Building 12.1.01</td>
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<td>5.00-5.30pm</td>
<td>Symposium speakers’ informal meet-up</td>
<td>Jurys Inn Hotel Costa Coffee Bar</td>
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<td>6:00-7:00pm</td>
<td><strong>Public Lecture by Ipek Demir</strong></td>
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<td><em>University of Leicester</em></td>
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<td>Title: “‘I want my country back”: Cosmopolitanism, Multiculturalism and Brexit?”</td>
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<td>Chair: Professor Chris Hopkins, Head of the Humanities Research Centre</td>
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<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Symposium dinner</td>
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**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December**

Venue: Charles Street Building, building 12, level 5

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<td><strong>Opening session</strong></td>
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<td>10.30 – 11.00</td>
<td>Morning tea</td>
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**Cosmopolitics Past and Present: Global activisms and the dynamics of race, faith and affect**

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<td>Seema Alavi (University of Delhi)</td>
<td>‘Muslim Networks and Cosmopolitan Sensibility in the age of Empire’</td>
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<td>Margaret Allen (University of Adelaide)</td>
<td>‘Charting a Course through Troubled Waters: The Indian YMCA c 1900-40’</td>
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<td>‘Subaltern Cosmopolitanisms and Settler/Colonial Spaces: Australia, Fiji and Indian Indenture during WW1’</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
<td><strong>Panel Two</strong></td>
<td>Fiona Paisley</td>
<td>Satadru Sen (City University of New York)</td>
<td>‘The Crisis of Cosmopolitan Nationalism in India and the World’</td>
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<td>Clare Midgley (Sheffield Hallam University)</td>
<td>‘In Search of Cosmotopia: William Adam and the Transnational Spaces of Radical Liberal Cosmopolitanism’</td>
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<td>John Narayan (University of Warwick)</td>
<td>‘Oppressed People are on the Move: The Global Politics of British Black Power’</td>
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<td>4.10</td>
<td><strong>Closing Session</strong></td>
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<td>Concluding comments from Joanna de Groot (University of York)</td>
<td>Publication plans – Clare Midgley (Sheffield Hallam University) and Fiona Paisley (Griffith University)</td>
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<td>5.00</td>
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<td>Network plans – Jane Haggis (Flinders University)</td>
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Cosmopolitics Past and Present: Global activisms and the dynamics of race, faith and affect

Finding your way around Sheffield

Travelling between locations on foot

- **Sheffield Train Station to Jurys Inn**
  via Sheaf St, Howard St, Arundle Gate & Eyre St
  12 minutes/0.6 miles
  *Exit station from main entrance, turn left up slope alongside 'wall of steel', cross over Sheaf St at pedestrian crossing then proceed uphill along Howard St pedestrian pathway. At the very top turn left into Arundel Gate and follow this along past the roundabout onto Eyre St to Jurys Inn. Additionally, there is a taxi rank outside the station so walking is optional.*

- **Charles St Building to Jurys Inn**
  via Arundle Gate & Eyre St
  3 minutes/0.2 miles
  *Turn left out of building then first left onto Arundel Gate, continuing past roundabout onto Eyre St to Jurys Inn.*

- **Cantor Building to Jurys Inn**
  via Furnival St & Eyre St
  3 minutes/0.1 miles
  *Turn left out of building then right along Furnival Street to the roundabout, where you turn left onto Eyre St to Jurys Inn.*
Information on speakers and paper abstracts

Seema Alavi University of Delhi

‘Muslim Networks and Cosmopolitan Sensibility in the Age of Empire’

This is the story of Indian Muslim men of religion who were on the proverbial ‘wrong side’ of the 1857 mutiny-rebellion against British rule in India. Condemned as ‘outlaws’ or ‘fanatics’ by the administration, they escaped from India and moved across the Indian Ocean world. The paper analyzes their journey as they travelled out of India and paused at the Asian intersections of 19th century Empires. It conceives the constellation of the British and the Ottoman empires as an ‘imperial assemblage’ and uses that as the context to study Muslim interconnectedness as forged by such émigrés. Bringing their biographies, written reflections, journeys, networks and imperial politics together, it highlights the ways in which ‘runaways’ carved a Muslim cosmopolitanism at the cusp of the British and Ottoman Empires.

The cosmopolitanism between Empires was unique because it conceptualized the Muslim cosmopolis as an intellectual and civilization zone that transcended political borders, territorial confines and cultural particularities. Its protagonists sought to encompass the ‘imperial assemblage’ within their capacious global cosmopolis. The cosmopolitanism forged in the imperial context became the basis of a global Muslim sensibility that competed with the increasing power of the idea of the nation in the course of the 19th century. Hence we may think of it as the basis for or the pre-history of the idea of trans-nationalism in the 20th century.

Biography: Seema Alavi is a professor of history at Delhi University, New Delhi, India. She specializes in early modern and modern South Asia, with an interest in the transformation of the region’s legacy from Indo-Persian to one heavily affected by British colonial rule. She has written books on the military, religious and medical cultures of the region from the early modern to modern times. Her most recent book is Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the age of Empire published in March 2015 from Harvard University Press, USA. Alavi earned her PhD from Cambridge University, England. She has twice been a Fulbright Scholar and a Smuts Visiting Fellow at Cambridge and was a visiting scholar at the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard. In 2010 she was at the Radcliffe institute at Harvard as the William Bentinck-Smith Fellow. She wrote Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770–1830 (Oxford University Press, 1995) and co-authored with Muzzafar Alam, A European Experience of the Mughal Orient: The I’jaz-i Arsalani (Persian Letters 1773–1779) of Antoine-Louis Henri Polier (Oxford University Press, 2001). In 2009 she wrote Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Medical Tradition, 1600–1900 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Margaret Allen University of Adelaide

‘Charting a Course through Troubled Waters: The Indian YMCA c 1900-40’

Through the first decades of the 20th century, the Indian YMCA negotiated a difficult course, indigenizing its leadership and most of its membership, being Christian and also supportive of the nationalist struggle, developing an anti-racist position while drawing financial support
from white business men in India and developing the social gospel in part through rural reconstruction programs.

This paper will explore these dilemmas and examine how the friendship and loyalty of some key figures, S.K. Datta, K.T. Paul, Herbert Popley and the powerful interventions of international leaders such as John Mott and E.C. Carter were crucial to the organisation as it groped its way forward towards a more cosmopolitan position.

Biography: Margaret Allen, Professor Emerita in Gender Studies at the University of Adelaide, she researches transnational, postcolonial and gendered histories, focusing upon links between India and Australia from c1880-1940. She has published on Australian missionaries in India and the experiences of Indian men negotiating the White Australia Policy. She recently co-published Cosmopolitan Lives on the Cusp of Empire: Interfaith, Cross-Cultural and Transnational Networks, 1860-1950 (Palgrave Pivot, 2017).

Ipek Demir University of Leicester

‘“I want my country back”: Cosmopolitanism, Multiculturalism and Brexit?’

My talk will discuss contemporary issues around race, difference and culture in the context of debates about multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and Brexit. The presentation will argue that multiculturalism was never about purely recognising diversity; it was about questioning national homogeneity and allowing minoritised groups to make claims and participate as equal citizens. I will also link multiculturalism to cosmopolitanism. The latter is typically conceived and read as a critique of nationalism as a sign of openness and thus the normative defence of the idea of human capacity to expand the sphere of identification and belonging beyond national boundaries. The political backlash against both can help us situate some of the debates which arose during Brexit.

Biography: Dr Ipek Demir is Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Leicester. Her work sits at the intersections of the fields of diaspora studies, ethno-politics, race and identity, nationalism, indigeneity, global politics as well as social and critical thought and interdisciplinarity. She has also carried out empirical research on Kurdish and Turkish diasporas, funded by an AHRC fellowship. She is the founder and co-coordinator of British Sociological Association’s Diaspora, Migration and Transnationalism Study Group and the former Vice-Chair of European Sociological Association’s Migration Research Network. Before joining Leicester she was a research fellow at the University of Cambridge, and also taught sociology and politics at the Open University, the Universities of of Sussex and Cambridge.

Joanna de Groot University of York

Symposium Commentator

Biography: Joanna de Groot has worked for most of her academic career at the University of York, UK. She is a founding member of the interdisciplinary Centres for Women’s Studies, and for Eighteenth century Studies, and a member of the Centre for Modern Studies. Her main areas of academic interest are in gendered histories of Iran since c.1800, and of empire, orientalism and racial othering especially in India and the Middle East during the 18th and 19th centuries. She has a particular interest in the uses of intersectional
approaches to gender and in comparative historical analysis. Her recent publications include ‘Inclusion and exclusion in the “Persianate world”: views of Baluch people in the nineteenth century’ in A. Amanat and A. Ashraf (eds), *The Persianate world: concepts and debates*, forthcoming Brill 2017; and ‘Depicting violence in India in 1857-8: the instabilities of gender, violence and colonialism’, *Cultural and Social History*, 2017. She is currently working on the first social history of Iran in the nineteenth century to be published in English. Joanna is on the editorial collective of Gender and History, is UK President of the University and College Union, and has participated on the executive committees of the Women’s History Network and the Social History Society.

Jane Haggis  *Flinders University*

‘Alternative and Vernacular Cosmopolitanisms’

This paper sets out to show that the ways in which historical actors have expressed cosmopolitanisms in the past continue to have purchase today. Drawing on my current study of faith and cosmopolitan thought zones on the cusp of empire (1880-1940) and my work on refugees and settlement in contemporary Australian link the historical and the contemporary uses of cosmopolitanism as expressions of globalised modernity.

Biography: Jane Haggis is Associate Professor in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at *Flinders University*. Her research combines historical analysis with social theory in the context of contemporary social and political issues in Australia. The book (with S Schech) *Culture and Development*, (2000), pioneered a postcolonial feminist analysis of Development Studies, while her engagement with critical race studies is reflected in an Australian Research Council funded project (with S Schech) “From Stranger to Citizen: Migration, Modernisation and Racialisation in the Making of the New Australian”, with associated publications including ‘White Australia and Otherness: The Limits to Hospitality’ in *Cultures in Refuge: Seeking Sanctuary in Modern Australia* (2012) and “Situated Knowledge or Ego (His)toire?: Memory, History and the She-Migrant in an Imaginary of ‘Terra Nullius”’ *Ngapartji, Ngapartji. In turn, in turn: Ego-Histoire, Europe and Indigenous Australians* (2014). She has also published widely on feminist historiography and gender and empire. She recently co-published *Cosmopolitan Lives on the Cusp of Empire: Interfaith, Cross-Cultural and Transnational Networks, 1860-1950* (Palgrave Pivot, 2017).

Clare Midgley  *Sheffield Hallam University*

‘In Search of Cosmotopia: William Adam and the Transnational Spaces of Radical Liberal Cosmopolitanism’

This paper will focus on the former Baptist missionary William Adam’s role in shaping intersecting transnational networks of liberal religion, social reform, radical abolitionism and feminism which connected nineteenth-century Indian, American and British activist communities. Deploying the concept of ‘cosmotopia’ it will examine Adam’s cosmopolitan religious and social activism and his role in founding a utopian community in order to throw new light on both the radical potential of liberal cosmopolitanism and the limits of its emancipatory agenda.

Biography: Clare Midgley is Research Professor in History at *Sheffield Hallam University*. She served as President of the International Federation for Research in Women’s History between 2010 and 2015. Publications include *Women Against Slavery* (Routledge, 1992);
**Cosmopolitics Past and Present: Global activisms and the dynamics of race, faith and affect**


**John Narayan** Early Career Leverhulme Fellow University of Warwick

‘Oppressed People are on the Move: The Global Politics of British Black Power’

The history of the US Black Power movement and its constituent groups such as the Black Panther Party has recently gone through a process of historical reappraisal, which challenges the characterisation of Black Power as the violent, misogynist and negative counterpart to the Civil Rights movement. Indeed, scholars have furthered interest in the global aspects of the movement, highlighting how Black Power was adopted in contexts as diverse as India, Israel and Polynesia. This paper will highlight that Britain also possessed its own distinctive form of Black Power movement, which whilst inspired and informed by its US counterpart, was also rooted in anti-colonial politics, New Commonwealth immigration and the onset of decolonisation. Existing sociological narratives usually locate the prominence and visibility of British Black Power and its activism, which lasted through the 1960’s to the early 1980’s, within the broad history of UK race relations and the movement from anti-racism to multiculturalism. However, this characterisation underplays and neglects how such Black activism conjoined explanations of domestic racism with issues of imperialism and global inequality. Through recovering this history the paper seeks to bring to a fore a forgotten part of British history and also examine how the history of British Black Power offers valuable lessons about how the politics of anti-racism and anti-imperialism should be united in the 21st century.

Biography: John Narayan is a Lecturer in Sociology at *Birmingham City University*. He was previously a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick. His current research focuses on the global politics of Black Power. He is author of *John Dewey: The Global Public and its Problems* (2016). And he is co-editor of *European Cosmopolitanism: Colonial Histories and Post-Colonial Societies* (2016).

**Fiona Paisley** Griffith University

‘Subaltern Cosmopolitanisms and Settler/Colonial Spaces: Australia, Fiji and Indian Indenture during WW1’

This paper considers the circulations of anti-slavery politics around Indian indenture in Fiji during WW1 and the role that indentured informants played in intersecting liberal imperial, humanitarian, and Indian nationalist projects bringing international attention to their plight and ultimately ending the system. It will outline the cosmopolitan worldviews of investigators Andrews and Pearson who became politicised in working-class London before in South Africa and in India where they worked with Gandhi and Tagore, with the indentured themselves, and in relation to what they reported was a progressive White Australia via which they travelled into the Pacific.

Biography: Fiona Paisley is a cultural historian at *Griffith University* who works on progressive networks during the first half of the twentieth century concerned with the

**Satadru Sen**  
City University of New York

‘The Crisis of Cosmopolitan Nationalism in India and the World’

The paper will examine, firstly, the construction of Indian nationhood as a form of cosmopolitanism in the first half of the 20th century. It will examine, second, the internal tensions and contradictions of that cosmopolitanism, and the exposure and exploitation of those contradictions by the politics of Hindutva. Finally, it will locate national-cosmopolitan subjectivity within a global crisis of the liberal-democratic state in the present time.

Biography: Satadru Sen is Professor of History at the City University of New York. He works on the history of modern South Asia. He has published extensively on the histories of punishment, childhood and race in colonial India. His most recent work is on conservatism and Indian nationalism. His publications include *Migrant Races: Empire, Identity and K.S. Ranjitsinhji* (Manchester University Press, 2004), and *Benoy Kumar Sarkar: Restoring the Nation to the World* (Routledge 2016).