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Labor, Democracy, and the Postcolonial State: Spaces of Union Organizing and the Duppy State in Britain and Trinidad

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This article examines the democratic political praxes and contestations developed by trade unions in relations with the postcolonial state in both the Global North and South. Our work is informed by the scholarship of Richard Iton on the postcolonial duppy state and notions of the colonial past haunting the postcolonial present through the rearticulation of racialized, imperial labor regimes and relations in a postcolonial context. We engage with Trinidad's Oilfields Workers Trade Union and the British National Union of Seamen to explore how this "haunting" was both contested and modulated by the labor activism of unions in both the former colony and metropole during the period of mid-twentieth-century decolonization. Empirically, we show how unionized workers sought to expand and entrench democratic cultures in opposition to the continued racialization of labor and the uneven power relations existent between labor, the state, and capital. This article responds to recent calls in labor geography to broaden the sites and subjects of study beyond workers in the Global North and introduces a study of the postcolonial state to claims to democratic politics in labor–state relations. *Key Words: Caribbean, democracy, labor geography, postcolonial, trade unions.*

In August 1975, *The Seaman*, the monthly paper of the British National Union of Seamen (NUS), reported discussions of "the employment of West Indian seamen on British ships" at the union's National Executive.[1] The article records that Gordon Norris, a Communist seafarer and long-standing member of the union's National Executive, in responding to an account of "talks with representatives of seamen from Trinidad and Barbados," implied that Caribbean seafarers were less adept at organizing than their British counterparts. He claimed, "The real reason British seamen would not stay in British ships was wages, this was why crews of convenience could come in. Shipowners prefer to employ seamen who will not organise themselves properly."

Norris's remarks reflected a commonly held position that inflected transnational labor relations between Britain and its former colonies. The construction of non-White or non-British workers as lacking the capacity of British workers led to a denial of agency that remobilized, at best, a colonial paternalism or, at worst, an imperial racial chauvinism. In this article, we explore how such racialized geographies of trade union organizing mapped onto contested articulations of democratic politics, labor, and the state. We do this through examining the NUS and Trinidad's Oilfield Workers' Trade Union (OWTU), trade unions with contrasting locations in relation to processes of decolonization in the 1960s and 1970s.

Both unions were sites of key struggles over democratic practices in this period. During the interwar and early post-World War II period, the NUS was a structurally racist union, organizing campaigns against seafarers from racialized minorities, and known for its close relations with shipping companies and the state. From the late 1940s to the early 1960s, strong rank-and-file movements challenged the antidemocratic cultures of the union. The OWTU was one of the largest and most militant unions in Trinidad. Following the OWTU's own internal democratization in 1962, the union contested the construction and trajectory of the

postcolonial state in staunch opposition to the People's National Movement (PNM) in government from 1956 to 1986.

The article engages with Iton's (2008) conception of the duppy state to intervene in debates about theorizing the spaces of democracy, labor, and the postcolonial state. Iton used this term to assert the haunting of the postcolonial state by lingering yet reworked effects and manifestations of coloniality. Situating Iton's work in relation to Caribbean thinkers within what Robinson (2000) termed the Black radical tradition (see also Rodney 1975; Best 2003; Fanon 2004), we analyze how democratic and labor struggles engaged in by the two unions negotiated reworked regimes and spatialities of coloniality. Taking forms of labor organizing as the starting point for questions of spaces of democratization offers an original lens on the spatial politics through which democratic politics is practiced and understood. This approach helps broaden accounts of democracy beyond the formal trappings of electoralism. We develop a practiced and multiple conception of democracy as enacted through situated labor struggles "outwith" the state and articulated with transnational geographies and regimes of racialization and (neo)colonialism. We thus unsettle the methodological nationalism that structures many accounts of democratic politics.

Responding to recent interventions by scholars of the Caribbean (Hernández Reyes 2019; Mullings 2021) to broaden the scope of labor geography research beyond the Global North, we explore unions that were differently placed in relation to processes of decolonization and trace the resistance of workers to racialized labor regimes. As Mullings (2021) argued, "examining how the unique forms of exploitation experienced by people racialized as property in the Caribbean, influenced the meanings they ascribed to, and agency they derived from different forms of work" (152) can make a significant contribution to labor geography. This article advances this claim by demonstrating how expressions of labor agency, in both Global North and South, are enmeshed within broader geographies and regimes of racialization and coloniality. It does this by locating democratic claims and struggles in relation to intersecting lines of oppression and in relation to struggles over the impact of Whiteness on labor organizing.

The following theoretical section discusses our engagement with Iton's (2008) work, drawing out its relevance for key thematics in labor geography. The article then examines the contrasting ways the OWTU and NUS negotiated relations between labor and the postcolonial state through discussing how they negotiated the racialization of labor and the uneven power geometries that existed between labor, state, and capital. We conclude by arguing for the importance of taking forms of labor seriously in relation to the uneven world-making processes shaped by decolonization.

Spatial Articulations of Labor, Democracy, and the Postcolonial State

In Iton's (2008) book *In Search of The Black Fantastic*, described by Austin (2018, 25) as a "seminal study of the black diaspora, internationalism and transnational politics," Iton characterized the postcolonial state as a duppy state. He argued that the postcolonial state "marks the potent afterlife, mocking persistence and resurgence—rather than the remission-of coloniality" (Iton 2008, 135). Iton uses Mignolo's (2007) definition of coloniality as the repressive "underside" of modernity where "modernity is presented as a rhetoric of salvation, it hides coloniality, which is the logic of oppression and exploitation" (162). For Iton, the logics of colonial racism and their attendant racial stratifications that are constitutive of modernity continually reinscribe the conditions of coloniality. Even in the postcolonial period the modernity–coloniality matrix of power continues to imbue and operate through the structures of the duppy state that reproduces racialized subjects and populations (Iton 2008). We use the term *coloniality* in related terms, to refer to the unfinished and ongoing legacies of colonialism in the present. The duppy "roughly translated from Jamaican patois, refers to the ghost that emerges following failure to properly bury the deceased: therefore emancipation is haunted by slavery, independence by colonialism, and apparent civil rights victories by Jim Crow" (Iton 2008, 135; see also Philogene Heron 2022; Simone 2023). The consequence of the duppy state's failure to dismantle the racialized labor regimes of the (post)colonial state is the further entrenching of the racial and class exploitation of non-White workers in the Global South and racialized minorities in the Global North, too.

Iton's work resonates with scholarship, much of it by Caribbean scholars, on the mechanisms through which colonial relations were rearticulated after independence. Fanon (2004) saw the national bourgeoisie of postcolonial states as perpetuating relations of dependence with the imperial metropole and stifling development of a national consciousness through their "deeply cosmopolitan mentality" (98). Fanon's analysis was developed by later Caribbean scholars such as Rodney (1975, 1996) and Thomas (1984), who argued that the capture of the postcolonial state by the national bourgeoisie meant the state primarily became a tool for their class reproduction. Thus, ties with metropolitan capital and imperialist states were often strengthened to prop up dependent economies and to secure class rule through military aid (Rodney 1975; Thomas 1984).

The Trinidadian scholar Best (2003), like Fanon (2004), saw the root cause of the perpetuation of colonial relations postindependence as epistemic coloniality, or as he termed it the "plantation mind" (Best 2003, 25; see also McKittrick 2013). Best criticized West Indian intellectual elites and political leaders for their inculcation into and reproduction of "Western thought." The epistemic coloniality of these national elites underpinned cultural, economic, and political dependency on European-American imperial powers. These thinkers lend different analytical contributions to Iton's (2008; Austin 2018) central contention that the project of modernity and the modern nation-state are predicated on an anti-Blackness that renders efforts by postcolonial elites to insert themselves and their duppy states into this project at best tragic and ultimately a failed strategy for confronting coloniality.

The British and Trinidadian states were on opposite ends of the processes shaped by these structural and ontological conditions during the period of mid-twentieth-century decolonization. Therefore, the OWTU and NUS were situated differently in relation to the haunting legacies of colonialism. Bringing accounts of labor organizing in these different states into conversation contributes to understandings of the relational and differentiated geographies shaped by the duppy state. This is significant as colonial legacies also shaped both relations between unions in the United Kingdom and the Caribbean and the terms on which connections between postcolonial states were understood.

Thus, in the 1970s John La Rose, a member of the "rebel" group in the OWTU in the late 1950s and early 1960s, argued that Caribbean migrants' encounter with British society "was an experience of naked colonialism" and that emigrants "accustomed to struggling against the colonial power from abroad [were] now transferred into the heart of metropolitan oppression" (La Rose [1976]2020, 14). Fellow Trinidadian Trevor Carter, a Communist Party activist, noted that after her deportation to the United Kingdom from the United States, Claudia Jones made important contributions to understanding the relations between racism and labor in the postcolonial context. Carter argued that Jones's analysis of the 1962 Immigration Act drew attention to institutional state racism, something that Jones linked directly to the colonial geographies of the United Kingdom (Carter with Coussins 1986, 69; Jones [1964] 2011, 171–74).

Iton's account of the duppy state offers important insights for understanding these dynamic and unequal geographies of connection shaped through such reconfigured state practices in the mid-twentieth century. He drew attention to how colonial regimes of labor exploitation and racial logics were rearticulated in postcolonial contexts and to how state–labor relations were negotiated through processes of decolonization. Suggesting that we "follow Foucault in his historicization of the roots of governmentality and bring the colonial connections that trigger and enable this movement out of the shadows" (Iton 2008, 136), he signaled how postcolonial labor regimes and antagonisms are still articulated through the modernity–coloniality matrix of power (Quijano 2000; Werner 2016). Iton (2008) further commented "that it [governmentality] is not a static, unending, inherently stable set of practices, contract, and relationships. Recognising the conditionality and contingency of these understandings, we can anticipate the possible horizons and disruptions of the grasps of these norms" (136). This account of postcolonial state dynamics sheds light on the multiple and contested relationalities shaped by articulations between labor and the state, positioning such relations as actively struggled over, emphasizing that such relations and spatialities were unfinished projects that could be reconfigured in different ways (Massey 2005). We contend that Iton's account of the postcolonial state offers productive ways to rethink the geographies of state–labor relations particularly through focus on the rearticulation of geographies and regimes of coloniality. This foregrounds the need for labor geographers to interrogate how colonial logics and regimes of racialization structure, and are negotiated through, workers' politics and democratic claims.

Processes of decolonization afte World War II significantly reconfigured the spatialities of the state and interstate relations in both colonized and colonizer contexts (e.g., D. Slater 2002). Articulations between democratization and labor organizing shaped the terms of these spatialities signaling that the form of such state relations was neither settled nor unilinear. Getachew (2019) argued this period of global decolonization should not be viewed as various singular examples of nation-building. Decolonization and anticolonial nationalisms articulated various world-making projects seeking to restructure the global order to produce a more just, equitable, and democratic system for international relations (Getachew 2019). These world-making projects took place in the repressive geopolitical context of the Cold War, with organized labor a key terrain where struggles over different visions of decolonization were articulated (Herod 2001; Tijani 2012; Teelucksingh 2015). Thus, Nkrumah (1966) observed that in "the labour field … imperialism operates through labour arms" such as the British Labour Party and the international Congress of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) (243–44).

As Nkrumah indicated, struggles took place over the terms on which unions in countries that were formerly colonized or colonial powers were linked. Khalili (2020) argued "in this feverish Cold War movement, trade unions could also act as a safety valve and prevent the spread of Communist ideologies among the workers" (185). Khalili positioned both shipping and oil as central to postwar world-making projects, giving strategic importance to both the OWTU and NUS. She argued that "Worldwide reconstruction, production, and trade all depended on the movement of petroleum and ships- and cooperation between management and labour was crucial to the circulation of goods and capital" (Khalili 2020, 185).

Differently positioned workers, shaped by distinct colonial and postcolonial trajectories intervened in these processes of circulation shaping multiple and contested democratic claims (Chua 2023). Recognizing such trajectories offers an alternative to accounts, such as Mitchell's (2011) *Carbon Democracy*, which flatten the diverse terms on which trade unions and democracy are articulated. His account of a straightforward shift from powerful trade unions associated with coal to weaker democratic practices in relation to oil forecloses a

nuanced engagement with situated democratic trajectories and agency (Mitchell 2011, 61). By contrast, Tijani (2012) and Tirmizey (2023) signaled how the process of decolonization was a contested political terrain wherein union activists articulated strategies for improved working conditions and rights with questions of national democratic expression and anticolonialism.

Further, as Tijani's (2012) work emphasizes, state practices and unions in the United Kingdom were reconstituted through particular geographies of relation indelibly shaped by imperial afterlives that had significant impacts on labor–state relations. As Elliot-Cooper (2021) demonstrated, authoritarian discourses and practices circulated between British colonies and the United Kingdom indicating how repressive elements of the colonial state apparatus became folded into domestic state structures during the period of decolonization and heightening Cold War tensions after World War II. These authoritarian discourses helped to buttress undemocratic working conditions and the exploitation of labor. Challenges to such unequal labor–state relations were integral to constructing labor agency in this period (Herod 2001; see also Doucette and Kang 2018).

In the West Indies, the beginning of the Cold War coincided with the constitutional decolonization process and the anticommunist interests of Western capitalist powers would powerfully shape the terrain of "legitimate" nationalist politics (Hintzen 2022). The incipient postcolonial national bourgeoisie and political class sought to maintain relations and alignment with the United States as imperial hegemon and Britain as the former colonial power with these the primary sources of capital influx (Hintzen 2022). There was also a cultural affinity that various Caribbean thinkers would root in epistemic coloniality (James 1984; Best 2003). In this environment, postindependence leaders would emphasize their anticommunist credentials to receive foreign backing and investment. The neocolonial relations of dependency that shaped the duppy state were modulated through discourses and logics of anticommunism that exerted pressure on spaces of democratization.

By tracing how trade unions and labor struggles have contributed to such "spaces of democratization" we seek to foreground forms of democratic agency articulated through labor activism. These include attempts to democratize labor–state relations and to

challenge the antidemocratic logics of transnational corporations, both of which have generally been rather ignored in existing geographical literatures on democracy. Barnett's (2017) influential work on the geographies of ordinary democratic politics does not consider trade unions, despite their importance as significant democratic political actors. By contrast, Slater's (2002) postcolonial account of democratic practices that locates them at the intersection of different "West–non-West" trajectories is more alive to the agency of social movements and trade unions. Werner's (2016) study of trade zones in Haiti emphasizes how worker struggles to win better working conditions and rights were articulated with political commitments and movements that sought to loosen the grip of metropolitan capital over the Haitian economy and state, seeking to democratize these relations. The OWTU would operate in much the same way in Trinidad. Mullings (1999) conducted similar studies in Jamaica and here again the undermining of economic sovereignty in the postcolonial state through trade liberalization and Structural Adjustment Programs has produced regimes of superexploitation and insecurity in deeply racialized ways. Such regimes and the geopolitical and international relations that structure them are contested through everyday forms of resistance by Black, and noticeably female, workers who seek to assert agency over their labor.

This section has contended that a sustained engagement with postcolonial theories of the state highlights different ways of engaging with the spatialities through which labor and democracy are articulated. We argue the following key issues are central to our contribution in the coming sections.

First, tracing the negotiation of the duppy state by unions and the struggles and democratic claims and practices they shaped emphasizes labor's importance in world-making processes in the context of decolonization. Engaging with thinkers of the Black radical tradition (Rodney 1975, 1996; Fanon 2004) highlights the constraints placed on democratic politics in newly independent states by postcolonial relations of dependence and capitalist neoimperialism. In what follows, we explore how these relations were brought into contestation by the OWTU, but also signal how the NUS's organizing at times reproduced neocolonial geographies.

Second, the preceding assessment of the Caribbean and Black thinkers we have engaged with challenges accounts of labor activism as narrowly economistic. Strikes of OWTU workers against exploitative conditions in Shell and Texaco installations were not narrowly sectoral industrial disputes but were often articulated as challenges to the grip of capitalist-imperialist firms over the Trinidadian economy and state. This positions labor agency (Herod 2001) as being shaped through both contesting broader national democratic relations between the Trinidadian government and multinational corporations (MNCs) and transnational relations between the Trinidadian state and metropolitan capital. Further, these labor struggles emphasize a deep understanding on the part of Black workers in the Global South of the international relations, transnational labor regimes, and global capital flows that constrained their democratic choices and expression.

Finally, engaging with the dynamics of the duppy state indicates how different articulations of the nation were shaped in relation to labor struggles (Tirmizey 2023). This included the antagonistic mobilization of constructions of the nation through antidemocratic discourses. As Hall (1988) argued, the UK Labour governments of 1966 through 1970 and 1974 through 1979 "set 'the unions' against 'the nation'" and "the 'sectional interests' of workers against the 'national interest'" by mobilizing discourses of "'the housewife' and 'the family' against the 'militant trade unionist'—the latter always, of course, a man)" (134–35; see also Kelliher 2021). This highlights some of the different antagonisms through which state–labor relations were articulated and contested in the cases discussed. They also suggest key spatialities through which colonial afterlives were made present.

Researching the Relations Between Unions, Democratization, and the Postcolonial State

To engage with how unions negotiated the spatialities of duppy state formations we explore how the two unions discussed provide different cuts through relations between organized labor and the postcolonial state. The OWTU provides a lens on a postcolonial state context, and the NUS demonstrates how British unions were directly enmeshed in some of the key impacts of decolonization in a formerly imperial state. Methodologically this allows us

to engage with different democratic trajectories regarding postcolonial state practices and transnational labor relations and geographies.

We use a transnational methodology, interrogating the geographies of labor and democracy that connect our cases (Hodder 2017). Drawing on archival collections in Trinidad such as the National Archives and official archives of the OWTU in combination with the papers of the NUS, including both national sources and branch records, we develop a spatial and historical analysis of the contestation of democratic politics by labor unions during the period of decolonization from both the metropole and postcolony. These readings of differently placed sources offer contrasting lenses on specific events and open analysis to voices and groups often sidelined in historical accounts. Eschewing a narrow focus on the democratic processes of unions themselves, we contend that thinking about trade unions' practices spatially can offer a more expansive lens on their activity and relations to broader processes of democratization.

This is significant for ways of considering processes of democratization as shaped by different actors "from below" as an alternative to accounts of democratic politics centered on electoralism and political parties. In our analysis of the OWTU and NUS we avoid characterizing these organizations as unified blocs governed by singular political goals, logics, and democratic tendencies (see also Byrne, Ulrich, and Van Der Walt 2017). Likewise, we seek to interrogate how unions themselves represent contested political spaces and some of their internal power relations engaging in depth with some of the racialized and gendered dynamics of the NUS and OWTU.

As Strauss (2020) argued, exploring articulations of racialized geographies of labor can be enhanced by grappling "with the standpoints from which we theorise *in* labour geography" (1215). We recognize that as geographers based in Scotland and England, who are racialized as White, we occupy a position of structural privilege that shapes our analysis of racialized geographies and labor regimes. This reflexivity is necessary to avoid recapitulating narratives of racist and colonial violence and to avoid reducing antiracist and critical Black thought and praxis to a curiosity of academic study (McKittrick 2013). By drawing together the OWTU and the NUS into conversation we seek to avoid mobilizing such

experiences and histories as metaphor or a generalization that flattens out the specific working of race and racism. By contrast we seek to foreground the specific trajectories shaped through these contested forms of organizing and to denaturalize some of the forms of Whiteness that were constitutive of NUS organizing. Further, by grounding our theoretical approach and analysis in the work of Black and Caribbean scholars, relating to both the United Kingdom and Trinidad, we have sought to locate these cases in the contours of broader antiracist imaginaries and political struggles. The next section examines how colonial logics of race and racialized labor regimes were reworked in relations between the state, labor, and capital during decolonization.

Decolonization, Race, and the Reconfiguring of Labor–State Relations

Gordon Norris, the Communist NUS executive member discussed in the introduction, was one of several militant seafarers central to challenges to the autocratic politics of the NUS in the 1950s and 1960s. Along with seafarers such as Jim Slater, Gordon Norris was a member of the National Seamen's Reform Movement (NSRM), a rank-and-file movement that rose to prominence in 1960 to challenge the undemocratic and right-wing-dominated NUS (J. Slater 1973). The NSRM mobilized against the interlocking relations between NUS leaders, state bodies and shipping companies shaped through transnational labor geographies (Wailey 1984).

While the NSRM sought to democratize the union there were limits to the way union militants challenged the relations between labor, state, and coloniality that were integral to maritime labor in this period. The racialized construction of the maritime labor market remained largely unchallenged and outside the provisions of the Race Relations Acts brought in by Labour governments in 1968 and 1976. The 1968 Race Relations Act exempting "the shipping industry from its employment provisions" not only "preserved the traditional racial segregation on British ships, but permitted discrimination on ships which operated wholly or mainly outside the UK" (Gordon and Reilly 1986, 77–78). Reporting on debates on the legislation at the 1967 Trades Union Congress (TUC) in *The Seaman*, Nash noted how the official NUS position was against legislation arguing that "in the Merchant Navy, although crew

members of different races, colours and backgrounds work together, and even live in the same ship together, absence of friction came about through the exercise of commonsense; and the alternative of legislation might create a worse situation" (Nash 1967, 185–86).

The shipping industry also "remained outside the ambit of the anti-discrimination law passed in 1976", despite being included in the 1975 white paper that preceded it (Gordon and Reilly 1986, 78). In response to correspondence from the NUS-sponsored MP John Prescott regarding several South Asian seafarers who had been detained in Barlinnie Prison in Glasgow, Roy Jenkins, then Home Secretary, commented that the 1976 Act did not mean that the government was "prepared to countenance the practice of discriminating against overseas recruited seamen indefinitely."[2] This demonstrates the ways structurally racist state legislation in the former imperial metropole, in the main supported by the NUS, became a mechanism for the perpetuation of racialized regimes of labor in the postcolonies in which the NUS and British ships operated (Iton 2008; Campling and Colás 2021).

In an interview with Tony Wailey in the mid-1990s, Mohammed Farah, a Liverpool-based Somali seafarer, noted that the union made significant changes for some seafarers from racialized minorities in the 1970s. He credited Slater, who became the NUS General Secretary in 1974, with improving the union, recalling, "The Union was good in the 1970s and became very strong—Jim Slater was good and conditions changed for the better. We were all in the NUS it was just a shame that as conditions improved for everyone all the jobs started to go" (Farah 2019, 86). The discussions concerning the employment of Caribbean seafarers with which we started the article emphasize, however, that tensions relating to the NUS's politics of race continued.

The context for these tensions was broader criticism of the British labor movement's racial politics. In 1968, Frank Walcott, the General Secretary of the Barbados Workers' Union (BWU), refused to attend the centenary celebrations of the British TUC protesting "British workers attitudes to West-Indians living in Britain" in the wake of Enoch Powell's White-supremacist "Rivers of Blood" speech in April 1968 (Walcott 1968). The BWU was one of several Caribbean unions representing seafarers that came into conflict with the NUS during the

1970s. Walcott had been central to the split in the Caribbean Labor Congress in the early 1950s aligning sections of Caribbean trade unionists with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU; Bolland 1997; see also Roberts and Marsh 2016). In contrast, the OWTU initially remained within the Soviet-aligned World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) but disaffiliated in 1953 due to an intense red-scare campaign surrounding WFTU membership in Trinidad (Bolland 2001).

In 1975 the BWU's monthly publication "The Unionist" had reported that earlier that year the NUS in Britain "began to mount a campaign to remove West Indian and other alien seamen from British registered ships" and that the BWU had "objected to this."[3] This situation led to meetings between the NUS, the BWU, and the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union of Trinidad and Tobago that involved "full and frank discussions regarding the employment of West Indian Seamen in British Flag Ships recruited from Trinidad and Barbados" (NUS 1975). The way these discussions were narrated by NUS officials highlights the ongoing racialized articulations of Britishness that structured the views of key figures in the union, including those on the left.

Jim Slater argued, for example, that "wages were not the only reason why seamen left the sea. There was a scarcity of seamen in all the high wage economies. It was essential that we assert and enforce some form of control over the ships employing non-British personnel."[4] Interventions by Slater and Norris mobilized British and non-British distinctions in racialized ways, reinforcing the significance of these divisions and signaling some of the exclusionary limits to the union's democratic imaginaries. Reports of the discussions regarding relations with West Indian unions indicate, however, that racialized constructions of seafarers' labor were challenged within the NUS.

Comments by executive member Mr. L. Lowe that "In his experience Asians were not mixers" and "preferred to keep to themselves" were met with resistance. Joe Kenny, a long-standing militant seafarer on Merseyside, argued that "it was derogatory to say that certain races approved discrimination and segregation,"[5] indicating some, albeit limited, challenges to the dominant intersections of race, coloniality, labor, and state that shaped the NUS's organizing culture. These struggles demonstrate that

the democratic cultures of the union were shaped in relation to ongoing negotiation of racialized dynamics in the shipping industry.

Such tensions became particularly acute in the wake of the decision of the NUS to set up a Joint Supply Office in Bridgetown, Barbados, in 1976. Although the NUS had a long history of working with other unions, often on unequal terms (Tijani 2012), this venture proved controversial, catalyzing further disputes with the BWU. The rationale given for the establishment of the Office in an NUS press release was that "Dissatisfaction with hiring and firing practices as well as prolonged intermittency of employment" had led to an increasing number of seafarers who had been members of the BWU "pressing to join" the NUS (NUS 1975). The press release noted that an "NUS Field Director" had arrived on 10 April—and "had registered over 700 seamen on his employment register"—indicating that the NUS had set up something more akin to an employment agency than a regular trade union branch. It indicated that "responsibility" for the Joint Supply Office would be handed over "to a Barbadian national" once a "viable organisational framework" had been developed (NUS 1976), reproducing quasi-colonial dynamics between the British head-quartered union and the Barbados branch. The NUS's communique also refigured a British-centered understanding of the geographies of shipping, observing that a "strong desire for action on long standing grievances" along with a "recognition that the negotiating power for their eradication lay in London provided the impetus for the Barbadian influx into the NUS" (NUS 1976).

Key officials in the BWU reacted extremely negatively to the proposals contesting the racial geographies that structured the Joint Supply Office. In an article in the *Advocate News* of 7 October 1978, which led to legal action from the NUS, Frank Walcott, the aforementioned BWU General Secretary, was quoted as saying "'We now have a situation where a trade union in England is determining the lives of Barbadians in a manner that the trade unions are not prepared to carry out'."[6] This positions the NUS's Joint Supply Office in relation to colonial labor geographies, emphasizing how the unequal geographies shaped by relations between labor, coloniality, and state practices were directly challenged by trade unionists such as Walcott.

There was also contestation of the operation of the Joint Supply Office from seafarers who were by then NUS members, although in markedly different terms than Walcott's.

A letter signed by more than seventy-one unemployed seafarers who were "members of the British National Union of Seamen (Barbados Agency)" and addressed to The British High Commissioner in Bridgetown, put forward ten grievances relating to the Joint Supply Agency. Complaints were raised about the "local agent," emphasizing that the NUS's intervention had been far from successful in resolving the issues raised in relation to previous methods of organizing seafarers.[7] The letter complained, "In the setting up of the NUS office here in 1976, it was agreed that there would be one common pool, but since the former agency secretary redundant, the old system is now returning, whereas, the agents can select, as well as reject a seamen, on the grounds of personal dislike."[8] The terms on which the letter was addressed signal the uneven transnational geographies within which the seafarers were located. Seafarers requested the Commissioner to write to the British Labour attaché who was stationed in Trinidad, so as not "to undermine the authority of the parent body of the National Union of Seamen 'UK' office," making recourse to British diplomatic officials over and above the structures and procedures of the postcolonial state in Barbados.

This indicates how contested claims on the state and unions made in relation to transnational geographies of power intersected with the regulation of seafarers' labor in the context of decolonization. These contested geographies resonate with current struggles against "anti-Blackness" and "the ongoing battle for reparations that activists in Barbados and throughout the region have fought for" (Simone 2023, 1242). The NUS involvement in Barbados here was a mechanism for the rearticulation of (neo)colonial relations between an independent Barbados and Britain with Barbadian citizens ignoring the legal and administrative structures of "their" postcolonial state. It indicates the enduring relations between state, coloniality, and labor and how this shaped the democratic cultures of the NUS in restrictive ways. The racialized articulation of transnational labor relations evidenced through the discussion of the NUS was opposed more consistently by the OWTU.

The OWTU, Race, and Postcolonial Labor Regimes in Trinidad and Tobago

1962 was a landmark year for both Trinidad and Tobago and the OWTU. Trinidad and Tobago gained independence in August and in June, the OWTU held their first executive elections using one-member-one-vote (OWTU 1982b; Bolland 2001). National independence and the popular election of a radical union leadership saw the OWTU seek to expand and entrench democratic politics locally, nationally, and internationally (OWTU 1982b).

The OWTU's democratization was the outcome of seven years of concerted effort by sections of the rank-and-file to win representation and input in the union's affairs. Those seeking to democratize the union were dubbed "the Rebels" by the press (Bolland 2001). An OWTU pamphlet celebrating twenty years of union democracy recounts that under the old constitution ordinary members were unable to stand for executive office (OWTU 1982b). The pamphlet summarized:

> Debate with and consultation of the rank and file membership did not form an integral part of the Union machinery in those days, so that the leadership acted as a bureaucracy divorced and alienated from the members and therefore out of touch with the workers' demands, concerns and wishes. (OWTU 1982b, 1)

The breakthrough came in 1962 in a dispute with BP over worker retrenchments. OWTU delegates instructed that strike action be taken to reverse dismissals, but John Rojas, then President General, sided with the employer who proposed hiring twenty-two workers as contractors (Bolland 2001). At the OWTU's 21st Annual Conference of Delegates, a one-member-one-vote constitutional amendment passed with new executive elections scheduled (OWTU 1982b). Rojas resigned instead of contesting these elections, with a "Rebel" Executive elected and George Weekes, one of the leading figures in the drive for democratization, elected President General (OWTU 1982b; Bolland 2001).

Concomitant with these struggles, in 1961 OWTU workers went on strike at Texaco and Apex oil facilities over wage disputes.[9] Jack Kelshall, an OWTU legal advisor and ally of the Rebel leadership, submitted an article to Trinidad's *Sunday Guardian* on the dispute that was refused publication due to its socialist overtones.[10] Kelshall constructed

the two sides of the dispute as non-White West Indian workers and White or "near white" company management.[11] Class relations within this dispute and the broader oil industry were understood to be aligned along lines of race and nationality and the remedy Kelshall suggested was the nationalization of the oil sector. This action would bring the strategic sector of the Trinidadian economy under the control of a soon-to-be democratically elected, independent Trinidadian government and removing foreign (White) control of the national economy in a key area. The OWTU consistently advocated that oil nationalization would deepen and protect postcolonial democracy in Trinidad. A Trinidadian economy dominated by MNCs was one still haunted by colonialism with metropolitan capital still shaping government policy and labor relations (Iton 2008).

The racialized dynamics of the oil industry were a central antagonism that the OWTU consistently organized around. A Colonial Office Intelligence Committee report from 1960 noted that at a meeting of the rebel faction, plans by Shell to retrench workers were spoken about alongside "disturbances in the Union of South Africa."[12] This is almost certainly a reference to the Sharpeville Massacre. The OWTU consistently protested MNCs operating in Trinidad that also operated in apartheid South Africa. The union later noted Texaco's board of directors had advised voting against a shareholder motion to cease operations in South Africa (OWTU 1978). Subsequent OWTU publications produced during a strike at Federation Chemicals plants in 1981 noted that company's links to racist regimes. The OWTU explained that Federation Chemicals was owned by the MNC W.R. Grace that had operations in South Africa and that a major shareholder of W.R. Grace was the Flick Corporation that had close ties to the Nazi Party and whose founder was jailed following the Nuremburg trials (OWTU 1981). The OWTU signaled the haunting of Trinidad's postcolonial present by a colonial racism perpetuated through the operations of metropolitan MNCs (Iton 2008).

It was through such agitation that the OWTU constructed its labor organization as being in service of the broader category of Black labor. In 1968, President General George Weekes was invited to a tripartite conference with representatives from labor, the government, and business to discuss the state of the oil industry and proposals to nationalize BP

assets (OWTU 1968). Weekes assessed the meeting to be a confrontation between Black labor and White capital where he attacked the "Government boys" for continued acquiescence to the demands of oil MNCs and their White ownership (OWTU 1968, 1). This acquiescence was characteristic of a postcolonial political class and national bourgeoisie failing to challenge neocolonialism (Nkrumah 1966; Fanon 2004; Iton 2008).

The year of the conference's convening, 1968, was a year of major political developments in the West Indies that had long-reaching repercussions for the region and the OWTU. In October, Kingston, Jamaica, saw a three-day urban insurrection sparked by the banning of University of the West Indies lecturer and theorist of Third World Marxism and Black Power Walter Rodney from the island (Lewis 2014). This was the emergence of Black Power politics in the West Indies and the movement would gain major traction in Trinidad. Radical students would be at the forefront and in 1969 student groups cooperated with the OWTU in a bus workers' strike (Meeks 1996). In 1970, this same alliance led Trinidad's Black Power Revolution that saw three months of escalating street protest and strike action culminating in an army mutiny. State power was reinstated by the government with U.S. Marines and British warships standing by (Meeks 1996). The OWTU's involvement with Black Power was rooted in a shared analysis discussed in this article. Both union and Black Power activists saw the West Indies duppy states haunted by the influence of foreign capital and the epistemic coloniality of the political class (Gowland 2023).

Returning to the conference, Weekes claimed the OWTU was locked into a third worldist struggle against "white imperialism" (OWTU 1968, 7). We use the term *Third World* in the mode of Prashad (2007), who understood Third Worldism to have been an alternative world-making project that sought the democratization of the international order, the just economic development of the Third World and the total reversal of imperialism and colonialism (Prashad 2007; Getachew 2019). Weekes closed his comments at the conference in the following manner:

> How long must we continue to allow our destiny to be controlled from New York and London? When shall we take up our bed and walk? When will we drop our bucket right where we are? When will the

Government see that a nation owned by foreigners can never be free and must always be slaves. (OWTU 1968, 30–31)

In the tripartite conference and through the continued agitation around MNC involvement in apartheid South Africa, the OWTU and Weekes laid out the racial-capitalist exploitation of Trinidadian labor and its transnational connection to other sites of racist oppression via the international operations of MNCs. This transnational analysis of the interconnection of the profit-seeking activities of MNCs with antidemocratic politics was central to OWTU protests. Weekes's positioning of the OWTU within an anti-imperialist geographical imaginary in opposition to the capitalist-imperialism of oil MNCs and the neocolonial Trinidadian government is representative of the ways figures within organized labor contributed to and proliferated third worldist world-making projects (Prashad 2007; Getachew 2019).

A remedy for these antidemocratic and racist transnational relations was articulated by Weekes at the conference:

> How I, Mr. Chairmen would like to turn BP from being called British Petroleum! It is oil and it is black so we will continue to say BP but with the different meaning of being owned and controlled by Trinidad and Tobago—BP—Black Power. (OWTU 1968, 32)

Weekes here was making a powerful connection between the race-conscious labor activism of the OWTU and a desire to democratize decision-making and profit-sharing in the Trinidadian oil sector through nationalization.

Although the OWTU positioned their struggles as a defense of Trinidadian and Black labor more broadly, this was often done in exclusionary masculinist terms. The OWTU often rallied around the masculine honor of providing a family wage to their, assumed, dependent wives and children. An OWTU pamphlet on oil nationalization articulates this: "the spectre of loss of employment without any hope of alternative work, without the cushion of social security spells ruin and calamity to **the worker and his family**" (OWTU 1982, 34, emphasis added. This rhetoric is especially galling as at the union's establishment in 1937 there were a great number of women involved in union activity with many at the forefront of organization and activism (Reddock 1994). As labor geographers attentive to the role of women's labor have documented, the "support" work

often provided by women to men in the labor movement is essential to the maintenance of the capacity for industrial militancy and strike action that was being constructed in narrowly masculinist terms by the OWTU (Smith 2015).

Our empirical engagements with the activism of the NUS and OWTU have shown how the racialized logics, structures, and labor regimes of colonialism came to be reworked in the period of mid-twentieth-century decolonization. The next section explores how the unequal relations between labor, capital, and the state discussed in this section were challenged by the OWTU and NUS.

Democratizing the Relations Between State and Capital

In 1982 the OWTU submitted a memorandum to the Trinidadian government entitled *Our Fight for People's Ownership and Control of the Oil Industry* (OWTU 1982a). The OWTU's core antagonism was that MNCs like Texaco made decisions at a global-corporate level with little consideration of what was best for Trinidad (OWTU 1982a). These companies were seen to have an "anti-national attitude" (OWTU 1982a, 11). The OWTU (1982a, 33) reported, "it is the Union's view that all aspects of the industry are of public concern since the industry is the livelihood of the nation" and thus oil was essential to every Trinidadian's welfare and should be brought under national, democratically elected government control. The OWTU thus occupied a strategic position in national and international politics, political economy, and worker struggle and would use this position to intervene in these interlocking scales to democratize the relations between government, labor, and capital that shaped the postcolonial state in Trinidad.

The memorandum outlined the actions of oil MNCs in Trinidad as potentially detrimental to national independence and democracy:

> The OWTU re-emphasises that such action [Oil companies profiteering ahead of cooperation with government] has far reaching effects on the prospects of political stability and the survival of democracy in Trinidad and Tobago … the spectre of loss of employment without any hope of alternative work, without the cushion of social security spells ruin and calamity to the worker and his family. (OWTU 1982a, 34)

Here was a dual analysis of the politically and economically corrosive effects of capitalist-imperialism and MNC profiteering in the Third World. The OWTU's third worldist analysis warned that the maintenance of capitalist-imperialist extractivism had routinely seen democratically elected governments toppled by Western imperialist powers. The OWTU specifically mentioned the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala in 1954 by the United States, which halted the process of land reform that would have seen the United Fruit Company's operations in the country nationalized (Prashad 2007). This imperialist intervention was legitimized in the furtherance of a Cold War anti-communism in the Caribbean basin. The OWTU had a well-supported claim that the interests of metropolitan MNCs had historically been inimical to democratic self-government in the region. This line of argument demonstrated that the specter that haunts the duppy state (Iton 2008) could be manifest through imperialist arms and soldiers to reinforce coloniality and protect capital investment.

The second core aspect of the OWTU's analysis in the memorandum was that Trinidadian workers, and as discussed earlier the Trinidadian people, were immiserated because the interests of oil MNCs were fundamentally misaligned with the national interest of Trinidad and Tobago (OWTU 1982a). Throughout the latter half of the 1970s and early 1980s, Texaco demanded tax reductions, wage controls, and extensive retrenchments from the Trinidadian government (OWTU 1982a).[13] These demands came against a backdrop of increasing profits for oil companies globally that "the then President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, in a statement about his proposed windfall profits tax on oil companies described … as *'obscene'*" (OWTU 1982a, 13, emphasis original). The OWTU saw Texaco's belligerence as a form of capital strike and one supported by "their political representatives in Washington" (OWTU 1982a, 21) who backed the winding down of the MNC controlled oil industry in the Caribbean to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

Alongside the memorandum, the OWTU established a project team on nationalization that would work with the government to organize and run a national oil industry. The OWTU's sectoral struggle for its workers in opposition to retrenchments and attacks on worker's pay proposed by Texaco were

constructed as part of a broader democratizing vision for the whole nation that would regain control over national resources. The OWTU's struggle required democratic control over oil and the government's confidence in the Trinidadian people to achieve such aims. Such confidence was seen to be sorely lacking due to the epistemic coloniality of the political class in Trinidad (OWTU 1982a; James 1984), which Best (2003) saw as a key means through which colonial dependencies were maintained post-independence. This lack of confidence in the Trinidadian people saw an overreliance on foreign capital and the emergence of antidemocratic politics under the PNM, including clientelism, attacks on civil liberties, and the centralization of power in the executive (OWTU 1978, 1982a; Best 2003; Quinn 2015). The PNM government's increasingly anti-democratic character was exemplary of neocolonial politics as a "process of retrogression" (Rodney 1975, 16; Fanon 2004).

The OWTU by contrast rejected this neocolonial mindset:

> Our firm belief is that political independence cannot be truly realised without economic independence, and that the first step to economic independence is control over the nation's human and natural resources. Our position on nationalisation is in keeping with our goal of people's ownership, our goal that **THOSE WHO LABOUR MUST HOLD THE REINS**. (OWTU 1982a, 76, emphasis original)

Meaningful independence beyond neocolonialism (Nkrumah 1966; Rodney 1996) and thus truly democratic national politics required control of the commanding heights of the economy. Furthermore, nationalization required national effort outside of cabinet and parliament, requiring the direct input of workers and unions (OWTU 1982a). Demands to nationalize shipping were also raised by the NUS and were part of contested articulations of the nation, labor, and shipping that became particularly intense during the 1966 seafarers' strike.

The dispute lasting for seven weeks between 16 May and 1 July was fought over a demand for a forty-hour week, a wage claim, and other grievances such as the near dictatorial provisions given to officers on merchant vessels by the 1894 Merchant Shipping Act (J. Slater 1973). At the height of the dispute in early June, 1966, 720 ships were strikebound and "20,758 members of the NUS [were withholding] their labour" (Imhof 1966). The strikers

were predominantly male, and the union adopted gendered discourse throughout the strike, appealing to seafarers' wives in terms not dissimilar to those used by the OWTU. In Liverpool a support group involving both seafarers' wives and stewardesses was established.[14] That female workers and wives were grouped together indicates the gendered construction of NUS organizing and indicated limited masculinist conceptions of democratization.

The strike was also shaped by a differentiated racialized geography. Press images of the strikes in Liverpool and South Shields suggest that pickets in these ports were overwhelmingly White, notable given that both ports had a strong presence of seafarers of color.[15] In Cardiff, however, the dynamics of the dispute were different and would appear to have built on mobilization in the branch around the unemployment of seafarers of color the previous year.[16] At a special branch meeting held in the port shortly before the start of the strike on 12 May 1966, the chair highlighted the unity that "existed amongst the membership," noting there was "not only unity amongst the membership, but also internationally, because of the various races who have attended the meeting today."[17]

During the dispute oil tankers emerged as a strategic target of international solidarity. On 8 June 8 the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) alerted affiliated dockers and seafarers' unions that:

> The NUS Executive Council considered the worldwide strike breaking tactics employed by the British shipowners, diverting British tankers and replacing them with foreign flag vessels, the switching of crews and cargoes and, by virtue of the provision of the iniquitous 1894 British Merchant Shipping Act the retention of crews on articles of agreement after the completion of a voyage. (ITF, 8 June 1966)

The circular demonstrates how oil tankers were central to the ways ship owners were circumventing the strike, indicating how the 1894 Merchant Shipping Act facilitated this. The terms on which tankers were targeted, however, highlights some of the racialized forms of maritime labor internationalism shaped through the dispute.

The ITF informed affiliated unions in mid-April that the NUS were due to call a strike from 16 May, but their activity intensified in early June. On 2 June, Hans Imhof, the ITF General Secretary, circulated requests from the NUS to "all ITF-affiliated

dockers' and seafarers' unions to keep a lookout for, and seek information regarding, 'foreign ships' that were being chartered by 'British shipowners to replace NUS manned vessels'" (Imhof 1966). The ITF correspondence notes that one of the two categories of vessels they were particularly keen to get information on was "foreign flag oil tankers now entering UK refineries, especially those foreign subsidiaries of Esso, Shell, B.P. tankers manned by Asians, and any other tankers which have definitely been diverted whilst at sea" (Imhof 1966).

This correspondence partly reflected the racialized labor regimes that structured the crewing of oil tankers and the broader racialized dynamics of the oil industry highlighted earlier in the article. The reference to tankers "manned by Asians" (Imhof 1966), however, makes clear that some tankers were targeted on directly racialized terms, emphasizing how solidarities could be shaped by the racialized power geometries of international maritime trade. Preexisting racialized labor regimes informed by long-standing racialized and colonial divisions of labor in shipping shaped the terms on which the relations between state, labor, and capital were brought into contestation (Campling and Colás 2021). Shipping line owners also sought to foment racialized divisions during the dispute. The chairman of Shaw Savill Line reflected at the end of the dispute on "whether we could continue to man that element of the British merchant marine carrying white crews."[18]

In his "official history" of MI5, Andrews (2009) averred that the strategy of targeting tankers was suggested to Gordon Norris by Bert Ramelson, the National Industrial Organizer of the Communist Party of Great Britain. This uncritically rehearses aspects of the "red-baiting" scare around the strike, led by then Prime Minister Harold Wilson's notorious speech denouncing the strike's leaders as a "tightly knit group of politically motivated men" (Andrews 2009; see also Thomas-Symonds 2022). Although there were discussions between Ramelson and militants involved in the strike,[19] recourse to a simplistic sense of a "conspiracy" occludes a focus on the democratic agency shaped by the strikers. The targeting of tankers emerged as a pretty straightforward demand of rank-and-file seafarers during the strike, for example, in a motion passed by the Cardiff branch on 31 May.[20]

Andrews's (2009) account also perpetuates a contemporaneous narrative that, as Thompson (1980) noted, positioned the strike as placing "national interests in danger" (160). For Thompson the increasing "statism" that informed the response to the strike and other industrial unrest in this period was a consequence of the end of empire. He observed that "experience gained in Ireland, India or Rhodesia" was being applied in "the security services, the army, and the police," noting that "these services are the last refuges of imperialism, within which a ghostly imperial ideology survives its former host" (Thompson 1980, 157). The links between shipping companies and newspaper outlets that underpinned narratives of the endangering of national interests, were powerfully challenged in Not Wanted on Voyage, a pamphlet produced by the Hull Dispute Committee in response to the Pearson Inquiry.

The Inquiry was established by then Minister of Labor Ray Gunter to enquire into the causes and circumstances of the dispute (Pearson 1966). The pamphlet developed a key critique of how the Pearson report took the valuation of the profits of shipping companies at face value and resonates with some of the democratic claims made by the OWTU in relation to multinationals. The pamphlet challenged this through demanding the democratization of knowledge regarding profits and ownership.

The pamphlet contested reports of the "supposed low profits in shipping," demanded a "full scale Inquiry into shipping profits and ownership," and contended that the "owners know all about our wages; we know very little about their profits" (Hodgins and Prescott 1966). These attempts to democratize knowledge of shipping profits were informed by a desire to make claims on broader structures of the shipping industry rather than just bargain over particular circumscribed issues. They were rooted in a critique of some of the accounting practices of key shipping companies, noting that "The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company Ltd has been declaring dividends of 10% quite consistently in recent years. But that does not tell the whole story by any means" (Hodgins and Prescott 1966).

The contention that the true profits of the ship owners were masked by accounting practices signals a broader critique of the capitalist relations underpinning the shipping industry (see also Campling and Colás 2021). A letter to delegates of the 1966 Labour Party conference accompanying copies of Not Wanted on Voyage emphasized the NUS activists' broader critique. It backed a resolution for the

nationalization of shipping at the conference and noted that the United Kingdom was still fundamentally "a capitalist society with the State exercising no corresponding legislation of control over the 80% of the economy which remains unplanned?"[21] This emphasizes how NUS activists, similar to the OWTU, positioned nationalization as an alternative to the impacts of capitalist shipping.

This section has discussed how the OWTU and NUS sought to democratize relations between state and capital to advance workers' rights. In Trinidad we explored OWTU agitation to nationalize the oil industry. This was constructed by the OWTU as advancing and protecting Trinidadian national democracy in opposition to the limitations placed on national economic policy and broader political trajectories imposed by the influence of MNCs rooted in the imperial core in conjunction with the local neocolonial political class. As in Trinidad, seafarers in the NUS identified the confluence of interest between shipping companies and the state in the form of restraining wages, but in terms that continued to be shaped by the legacies of racialized and colonial divisions of labor in the shipping industry. In both these cases we see evidenced the haunting malevolence of the duppy of colonial racism and its articulation with state policy and the functioning of capital (Iton 2008). In Trinidad, the OWTU sought to confront the still-lingering devaluation and exploitation of Black labor by metropolitan capital and perhaps attempt to exorcise the duppy state through oil nationalization. In Britain, the state-sanctioned racism of the NUS and British shipping, despite significant challenges documented throughout this article, "signifies the remains of the irrepressible" (Hesse et al. 2015, 377). The British state's transition to postimperial governance saw no coeval progression to the end of the coloniality of the relations between state, labor, and capital with the expendability and disavowal of specific workers still operational through categories of race (Iton 2008).

Conclusions

We have argued that Iton's account of the postcolonial state offers productive ways of scrutinizing the geographies of state–labor relations in the period of decolonization. Iton's (2008) account of the duppy state is productive to engage with because of his notion of the colonial past haunting, in a refigurative and not merely replicatory sense, the postcolonial present. This take on the postcolonial state has helped us foreground the rearticulation of imperial, racist labor regimes both nationally and transnationally. We have traced the spatialities of the duppy state to outline the relational geographies through which labor organizing and postcolonial states were articulated. Engaging with the NUS and the OWTU, we have explored how unions placed in very different relation to processes of decolonization shaped democratic claims and practices—and in the case of the NUS and BWU some of the contested relations between them.

Throughout we have signaled some of the key mechanisms for this continued haunting with reference to Caribbean scholarship on the constraints neocolonialism placed on spaces of democratization (Thomas 1984; Rodney 1996; Fanon 2004). Our period of study saw the emergence of varied state projects and world-making efforts in the Global South (Prashad 2007; Getachew 2019), coeval state restructuring in the Global North, and significant changes in the relationships between former colonies and metropoles specifically. This article has signaled the importance of seeing trade unions as central actors in such world-making processes. Therefore, the article offers alternatives to Getachew's (2019) influential account of decolonization that centers agency primarily in particular key leadership figures. This is an important intervention as scholarship on world-making after empire represents an exciting and emergent field of study and we hope this focus on nonelite actors and organizations is taken forward into future work.

This has particular consequences. First, it signals important forms of democratic agency shaped through attempts to democratize labor–state relations and to challenge the antidemocratic logics of transnational corporations. Second, by stressing the ways differently positioned workers negotiated the reproduction of haunting legacies of racialized and colonial divisions of labor the article has signaled the importance of engaging with the different ways unions related to and were themselves structured by processes of racialization. This is a point that has been underexplored in studies of racialized labor geographies to date (Strauss 2020) and our article speaks to this lacuna through our examination of the racialized internal divisions within the NUS.

Further, engaging with the struggles of unions like the OWTU against the duppy state signals the importance of tracing articulations of developing conversations between work centering anticolonial discourses and labor geography (Tirmizey 2023).

This article foregrounds the democratic claims articulated by workers in contestation and negotiation of the racialized social and economic devaluation of their labor power (Pulido 2017). Workers within the OWTU and NUS were well-positioned to interrogate and challenge the continued coloniality of labor and the state in diverse contexts. These workers were enmeshed within transnational industries through which (neo)colonial geographies of dependency and the racial division of labor were being reworked during the period of formal decolonization. In efforts to democratize these labor relations and to dismantle racialized labor regimes a complex and nuanced geographical analysis and spatial politics was developed that was not nationally bounded despite frequent confrontations with the British and Trinidadian states. These efforts to expose and overturn these haunting legacies of colonialism were not universally shared or successful, as highlighted through study of the NUS. Although the histories of these two trade unions are instructive and worthy of greater interrogation, there is much work still to be done, in labor geography and beyond, to fully realize the disruptive relations of coloniality that still structure labor relations and duppy states in both the Global North and South.

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Notes

1. *The Seaman*, August 1975:122.
2. Letter from Roy Jenkins to John Prescott dated 5 July 1976, MRC MSS 175a/152.
3. Modern Records Centre (MRC), University of Warwick, MSS 1751/152.
4. *The Seaman*, August 1975:122.
5. *The Seaman*, August 1975:122.
6. MRC MSS 1751/152.
7. MRC MSS 1751/152.
8. MRC MSS 1751/152.
9. The UK National Archives, Colonial Office Records, CO 1031/4217, Kelshall, J: It is time for the government to intervene in the oil crisis, 1961.
10. The UK National Archives, Colonial Office Records, CO 1031/4217, Kelshall, J: It is time for the government to intervene in the oil crisis, 1961.
11. The UK National Archives, Colonial Office Records, CO 1031/4217, Kelshall, J: It is time for the government to intervene in the oil crisis, 1961, 1.
12. The UK National Archives, Colonial Office Records, CO 1031/4217, Trinidad and Tobago Intelligence Committee—Industrial Relations Report, March 1960, 1.
13. The UK National Archives, Foreign & Commonwealth Office Records, FCO 44/3044, Texaco Trinidad Ltd, 1983.
14. Liverpool Echo 3 June 1966.
15. E.g., Shields Gazette, 28 May 1966, 6 June 1966 and 9 June 1966; Liverpool Weekly News 16 June; Liverpool Daily Post 17 June.
16. Glamorgan Archives, GB 0214 DNUS Minute Book 2.
17. GB 0214 DNUS Minute Book 2.
18. Liverpool Daily Post 6 July, 1966; conversation with Tony Wailey on 23 November 2022.
19. See the Party's own accounts of activity during the dispute in People's History Museum Archives CP/IND/GOLL/04/07.

20. GB 0214 DNUS Minute Book 2.
21. This quote is from a letter in possession of the authors that accompanied copies of the pamphlet that were given to delegates at the conference; the letter is unsigned.

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