

# In the Wake of Colston: Wake Work after Woke Work

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What does it mean to defend the dead? To tend to the Black dead and dying: to tend to the Black person, to Black people, always living in the push toward our death? It means work. It is work: hard emotional, physical, and intellectual work that demands vigilant attendance to the needs of the dying, to ease their way, and also to the needs of the living.

—Christina Sharpe<sup>1</sup>

A world divided into compartments, a motionless, Manicheistic world, a world of statues: the statue of the general who carried out the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge; a world which is sure of itself, which crushes with its stones the backs flayed by whips: this is the colonial world.

—Frantz Fanon<sup>2</sup>

## The fall

On 7 June 2020, amidst anger in the wake of the murder of George Floyd (who suffocated under the knee of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin), the statue of Bristol slave trader Edward Colston was pulled down by Black Lives Matter (BLM) protesters before being unceremoniously dragged through the streets and dumped in Bristol harbour.<sup>3</sup> The

statue was erected in 1895 to celebrate Colston's philanthropic contributions—donations to schools and hospitals—to the city of Bristol. These were funded by his involvement in the Royal Africa Company (RAC), which was responsible for shipping up to 84,500 slaves to the United Kingdom from West Africa, and for at least 19,300 fatalities.<sup>4</sup> This monument to Colston was one of many late-Victorian attempts to, quite literally, cast the mythology of British exceptionalism. It should be unsurprising that the commissioning of Colston's statue coincided with a period of violent corporate-colonial expansion. This was the 'Scramble for Africa', which followed the partitioning of the continent during the 1884–85 Berlin Conference by European powers.<sup>5</sup> Empire soldiers attacked kings and chiefs who failed or refused to comply with the attempts of the British Empire to establish commercial monopolies on raw materials. They plundered villages, raped women, and looted artefacts and regalia. In the years immediately before and after the

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Statues in Britain Began to Fall' *The New Yorker* (2020).

4 Mark Steeds and Roger Ball, *From Wulfstan to Colston: Severing the Sinews of Slavery in Bristol* (Bristol Radical History Group 2020) (as cited in Saima Nasar, 'Remembering Edward Colston: Histories of Slavery, Memory, and Black Globality' (2020) 29(7) *Women's History Review* 1218).

5 Chapters 'World War Zero', 'Corporate-Militarist Colonialism', and 'The War on Terror' in Dan Hicks, *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* (Pluto Press 2020). Hicks notes how the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference of November 1889–90 'marked a new threshold in the suppression of the slave trade, shifting public opinion about the continued existence of slavery in Africa ... giving new impetus to the military operations' of the British Empire protectorates and companies, namely the Royal Niger Company (RNC). Hicks notes the focus in the language of the RNC's GT Goldie on 'opening up' and 'breaking into' Africa. Goldie said that slavery was 'leveraged in the RNC's commercial interests'. Hicks cites: GT Goldie, 'The Niger Territories' *The Times* (London, 21 December 1888) 14; *British and Foreign State Papers* 87 (1894–95) 929.

1 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press 2016) 10.

2 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (first published 1961; Constance Farrington tr, Grove Press 1963) 51.

3 On 20 April 2021, Chauvin was found guilty on three charges by a US Jury: second-degree murder, third-degree murder and manslaughter. For a transatlantic perspective on the fall of Colston, see Anna Russell, 'How

installation of Colston's statue, the British Empire waged several small wars and punitive expeditions across West Africa,<sup>6</sup> notably the Anglo-Ashanti war of 1895, which established the British Empire protectorate over Ashanti, and the Benin Expedition of 1897, which resulted in the sack of Benin City and theft of the Benin Bronzes. This corporate-colonial expansion was undertaken on ostensibly anti-slavery, humanitarian grounds. It purported to free enslaved Africans from the fetish rule of ritual sacrifice and cannibalism and to establish free trade. It therefore upheld the post-Wilberforce myth that Britain stood for the progressive emancipation of slaves the world over, whilst consolidating material dominance over Black Africans through a racialised capitalism. It was a Victorian 'war on terror' comparable to the liberal interventionism of the Major and Blair governments.<sup>7</sup> The paradoxes of post-slavery Britain were thus, literally, and figuratively, embodied in the statue of Colston from the moment it was erected. The statue projected to future generations a euchronia in which colonial exploitation was compatible with charitable goodwill. It stands as an index of the hypocrisy of the British Empire, which, after slavery, cloaked its expansion of imperial power abroad in the language of liberation whilst continuing to celebrate slave owners at home. Therefore, we can say that the end of slavery in 1833 had done nothing to halt the implementation of a state-backed ideology of White supremacy and imperialism. In 1895, three years before the Colston statue was unveiled, this ideology was given a particularly theatrical expression, to much fanfare. Incoming Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain, father of future prime minister Neville Chamberlain, said the following:

My career as Secretary of State for the Colonies is given yet to be made; but I will say that no one has ever been wafted into office with more favorable gales. I will venture to claim two qualifications for the great office which I hold, and which, to my mind, without making any invidious distinctions, is one of the most important that can be held by any Englishman. These qualifications are that, I believe in the British Empire and, in the second place, I believe the British race is the greatest of governing races that the world has ever seen. I say that not merely as an idle boast, but as proved and evidenced by the success which we have had in administering the vast dominions which are connected with these small island, and I believe accordingly that there are no limits to its future.<sup>8</sup>

Colston's statue is now in the Bristol Museum. However, that it 'swam with the fishes' is testament to a growing, populist antiracist sentiment in Britain, and to the waning of imperial hagiographies instantiated by Chamberlain and others. Such hagiographies would sustain Frantz Fanon's manicheistic 'world of statues', in which Colston, Robert Milligan, and Cecil Rhodes tower over us, elevated by seven feet of Portland stone. There is something like poetic justice

in the rippling of the water as Colston sinks into the harbour. It can be watched and rewatched ad infinitum on the internet, as can the (unfortunately memetic) murder of George Floyd, which sparked the protests. Colston must have thought himself master of this harbour, and his RAC ships, water foaming in their wake, would have docked there. The poetry of Colston's dememorialisation was only enriched by the fact that, as Saima Nasar has noted in her study of Colston and memory, Colston's statue was drowned near Pero Bridge. The bridge was named after Pero Jones, a slave transported to Bristol from the Caribbean Island of Nevis by the merchant John Pinney (1740–1818).<sup>9</sup> The ghosts of Jones and slaves like him have not so much been exorcised by the fall of Colston as put to work again. This work is not the kind of work to which they were accustomed hundreds of years ago. It is not kind of work that turns bodies into flesh, it is not the kind of work that makes men and women inhuman, and it is not the kind of work valued only by yield. It is the work of the Black dead, it is the work of haunting which can only be done by spirits, it is the work of the children of slaves, it is the work of undoing the Whiteness of the world.

### Wake work

We live, as Christina Sharpe's analogy for the lives and afterlives of slavery would have it, in 'the wake' of the slave ships that Colston bought and paid for. We must deal in the present with recurrences of (apparently historical) antiblack dispossession, violence, and subjugation. Racism is not, as many have recently claimed, a virus. Racism cannot be vaccinated against. Racism is a duration, the haunting of Black lives in the present by an antiblack past that is not yet past. '[I]n the wake, the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present', writes Sharpe. '[T]o be in the wake is to occupy and to be occupied by the continuous and changing present of slavery's as yet unresolved unfolding.'<sup>10</sup> How, then, to meet the 'unresolved unfolding' of slavery in the present? That is the fundamental question to debates surrounding the dememorialisation of individuals who, like Colston, are implicated in the violent ideology of White supremacy. Sharpe situates the concept of 'the wake' in relation to her personal experiences as a Black woman in the aftermath of the death of Erica Garner, a Black female activist who campaigned for police reform and was killed by police in Staten Island, New York. Sharpe employs an astute critical analysis of the antiblack, exclusionary logics of the everyday processes of racialisation in America. She examines the contemporary experiences of Black Americans in relation to the materiality of the transatlantic slave ship, drawing parallels between 'the hold' of the ship, the area to which slaves were confined during their journey, and America's racialised prison structures.<sup>11</sup> We contend that Sharpe's is precisely the kind of antiracist imaginary we ought to adopt in the wake of Colston, rejecting the neat boundaries between the historical and the contemporary that—typically but not exclusively—reactionary conservatives have attempted to redraw. They have done so to pardon the moral indiscretions of memorialised British slave owners, on the grounds that historical injustices are somehow 'over there', hypostasised, sealed off from the present. Such an imaginary does not come easy, however. It requires work. Sharpe calls this 'wake work': a Black praxis of being that unveils and articulates the structural, discursive, and material

6 Hicks (n 5) describes how small wars were ostensibly waged as humanitarian violence against pagan, slave-owning indigenous peoples, but in fact cloaked a creeping, corporate-colonial extractivism. Hicks specifically refers to the tactics of small wars as outlined in Colonel CE Callwell, *Small Wars Their Principles and Practice* (1896). They were commonly undertaken as a form of restitutive violence against kings who failed to comply with the demands of the British Empire colonial protectorates and companies.

7 We owe this formulation (and indeed the rhetorical impetus for this piece as a whole) to the recent but indispensable Hicks (n 5).

8 Joseph Chamberlain, 'Mr Chamberlain and the Colonies' *Glasgow Herald* (12 November 1895) (as cited in Hicks (n 5) 79).

9 Nasar (n 4).

10 Sharpe (n 1) 13–14.

11 Chapter 'The Hold' in Sharpe (n 1). For a concise summary of Sharpe's work see Dana Horton, 'Review of *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* by Christina Sharpe (Duke University Press)' (2018) 7(1) *Marxism and Cultural Studies*.

configurations of contemporary antiblack violence, with a view to imagining a world, an episteme, in which the imminent loss of Black life is no longer normative, no longer an everyday reality.

Although the concept of wake work has been formulated in the specific and somewhat problematic context of North American Afropessimist literature (a full assessment of which is beyond the scope of this paper), it provides a useful theoretical starting point for debates on the memorialisation of slavery in the United Kingdom. This paper cannot claim to provide a comprehensive overview of Sharpe's concepts of 'the wake', 'wakefulness', and 'wake work'. Instead, it takes the metaphor of the wake as a point of departure for studying 'the 'woke', 'wakefulness', and 'wake work', with reference to the fall of Colston and subsequent social media furore.

The thrust of our argument is as follows. The superficially antiracist outpouring of White wokeness that followed the dememorialisation of Colston is ultimately antithetical to the intellectual and practical labour of antiracist wake work. Wokeness, whether employed for leftist self-identification or alt-right invective, is fundamentally unhelpful to authentically antiracist wake work. We view wokeness as being unhelpful both to practical political organisation and to the undoing of White onto-epistemological structures that make racism possible. On the level of praxis, our critique of wokeness should deter antiracists, particularly White antiracists, from perpetuating the so-called 'culture war' stoked up in the United Kingdom by Priti Patel and other conservative ('small "c"' and 'big "c"' conservative) commentators.<sup>12</sup> Our view is that the culture war does the work of anti-antiracists by exacerbating identitarian struggles constructed by neoliberal capitalism since the 'last days of the working class' under Thatcher and Reagan. These struggles have accelerated since the 2008 financial crash, and they delimit a stolid, seemingly unmoving space for a 'radical politics' that is neither radical nor political. It is easily consumed and subsumed by and for capital, with both academic and popular antiracism becoming reified Internet commodities. Wokeness, we argue, fundamentally restricts the development of an intersectional politics that could contend with the structures of racial capitalism that wokeness purports to counteract (but merely reproduces). Wokeness apprehends a genuinely emancipatory 'group-consciousness'—to borrow a term from the late Mark Fisher's unfinished *Acid Communism*—that unites rather than divides various identity politics, and disarticulates the category of race from the categories of class and gender.<sup>13</sup> More fatally, wokeness does not adequately tackle the epistemological—historical, scientific, and metaphysical—foundations of the category of race which ground White supremacy. It thereby substitutes the revolutionary thinking of Black radical Marxism for—not to put too fine a point on it—parody and farce. In our view, what is required is not simple opposition to racism, but a *split* from the politics and modes of knowledge production that sustain the category of race and therefore racism.

12 Here, we refer to Priti Patel's public rejection of the Black Lives Matter movement and of the demonumentalisation of historical figures. See Gabby Hinsliff, 'The Tories want a war on the woke – as if there's nothing better to do' *Guardian* (15 February 2021).

13 The concept of 'acid communism', along with Mark Fisher's nuanced musings on identity politics, are shown in a new light in Matt Culquhoun (ed), *Mark Fisher: The Final Lectures* (Repeater Books 2021). Culquhoun elaborates on Fisher's apparent rejection of identity politics on the grounds that it serves to 'do the work of capital' by subordinating class struggle. This was articulated in the controversial article Mark Fisher, 'Exiting the Vampire Castle' (*The North Star*, 22 November 2013).

## Woke work

Drawing on recent philosophical work on the epistemological implications of internet 'echo chambers', we view wokeness as a form of 'epistemic dependency'. The woke systematically exclude and distrust sources external to the immediate milieu of their chamber, working to actively undermine the truth value of propositions which contradict the beliefs of those within the chamber.<sup>14</sup> Wokeness promises the undeliverable promise of extrication from unconscious racism. Wokeness, prescribed or self-described, is the apparent ability to differentiate oneself from the dominant archetypal imperialist culture of White supremacy. The problem is that woke politics does the opposite, emboldening the structures of White supremacy that it hopes to critique. Wokeness lets one superficially differentiate oneself from antiblackness by posting antiracist imagery on social media, by disseminating unread reading lists, and by substituting White faces for Black squares. It thereby lets one ingratiate oneself in a new and imaginary online community or politics. We use the term 'imaginary'—in the negative, pejorative sense—as opposed to 'virtual', because 'virtual' suggests possibility, whereas wokeness is precisely the negation of possibility. What occurs in wokeness is not 'awakening', but the identification of wokeness with the object of woke critique. The woke need antiblackness to sustain a commodifiable aesthetic of radicality and alterity. Need we point out that major corporations have co-opted Black radicalism, or that 'taking the knee' has become a hollow gesture incommensurate with fighting antiblackness? There can be no doubt that experiences of racism are defined through the construction of Whiteness and are reserved for those who are racialised. However, antiracism is not only rejecting White supremacy at the ideological, superstructural level—in the case of social media activists, at a superficial ideological level. It is also working towards an understanding of the material conditions, or materiality, which produced and were subsequently reproduced by the category of Whiteness. By materiality we do not only refer to the Marxian concept of a racist economic base reflected in a necessarily racist ideological superstructure, but also to an antiblack materiality which Sylvia Wynter called a 'substance of race', or a substantialist metaphysics of race, whereby the category of race 'constitutes an ordering of the world through the image of White supremacy as a precondition for the structuring of society'.<sup>15</sup> Whiteness is a hyperstitional construct: White ways of being become normative insofar as the idea of Whiteness causally brings about its own White reality. From the emergence of chattel slavery, a racialised equation of surplus value—which necessarily devalued Blackness—was established by the concept of Whiteness.

Blackness was conceptualised as what Heidegger called a 'standing reserve' of material for extraction, exploitation, and instrumentalisation by Whiteness.<sup>16</sup> Whiteness, on the other

14 See eg C Thi Nguyen, 'Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles' (2020) 17(2) *Episteme* 141.

15 Sylvia Wynter, *Human Being as Noun? Or Being Human as Praxis? Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overtun: A Manifesto* (Duke University Press 2015) (as cited in Ramon Amaro and Murad Khan, 'Towards Black Individuation and a Calculus of Variations' (2020) 109 *e-flux journal*).

16 See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (W Lovitt tr, Harper and Row 1977) 14–18 for the concept of 'standing reserve' and its related concept of *Gestell* (enframing). Heidegger describes a network of interrelated material exploitations in which the possible instrumentalisation of Nature is revealed by modern technological development. 'A tract of land is challenged into the putting out of coal and ore. The earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit. The field the peasant formerly cultivated and set in order [*bestellte*] appears differently than it did when to set in

hand, became a set of normative ‘prototypical values’ against which Blackness was measured, instantiating a colonial epistemology of ‘racial equivalency’ in which ‘the act of racism justifies the setting of the White individual over and against the individual’.<sup>17</sup> During the Industrial Revolution in particular, Blackness was, as geographer Kathryn Yusoff has influentially argued, conflated with convertible raw materials such as gold, copper, manganese, lithium, and nickel, and like these materials it was exploited to the ends of capital accumulation and technological innovation.<sup>18</sup> Blackness became at once the energy reserves, labour power, and surplus value of racial capitalism. Whiteness was, of course, the master of said racial capitalism. To have value in the world of racial capitalism one must, particularly if you are black- or brown-skinned, be White. One must conform to the onto-political regime of Whiteness.

If we understand Sharpe’s concept of wake work to be the unveiling of the residues of colonialism and slavery in the contemporary world, we can say that wokeness is merely the appearance of an unveiling. Wake work constitutes otherwise unconstituted logics of antiblackness in order to undermine and disarticulate the epistemological ground on which antiblackness stands. By contrast, woke work *conserves* antiblackness by reifying it, fixing it in time as an immutable social fact that, unable to be overcome, can only be tweeted about.

### What to do with Colston?

In the days and weeks following the fall of Colston’s statue, two questions lingered. What to do with the statue? And what to do with the plinth on which it stood? The former question was quickly and (relatively) uncontroversially answered when the Bristol Museum announced that it would collect the vandalised Colston statue. The latter question is yet to be answered in any meaningful way. First, we address the statue itself. Having been musealised, Colston’s statue becomes, much like the critique which saw it fall, a reified object, only this time as an artefact of an ineffectual antiracist movement that—thus far at least—has done little to change anything. This is not to discredit the palpable sense of anger, exhaustion, and frustration at the continued devaluation of Black lives felt in Bristol on that day, but instead to take aim at the outpouring of weak antiracist sentiment—not action, not work—that followed. Let us be clear: the fall of Colston demonstrated the potential for an emancipatory politics grounded in the problem of race. That much is undeniable. However, the consumptive and compulsive desire to appear woke that framed and aestheticised the fall of Colston was problematic, and remains so. It fundamentally undermines a revolutionary praxis grounded in race—a praxis that, to reiterate, would articulate rather than disarticulate the categories of race, class, and gender. If the political potential of the fall of Colston is to be realised, then the statue cannot be allowed to return to the object world, to the world of statues. It is not the material of the statue which needs to be

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order still meant to take care of and to maintain. The work of the peasant does not challenge the soil of the field. In the sowing of grain it places the seed in the keeping of the forces of growth and watches over its increase. But meanwhile even the cultivation of the field has come under the grip of another kind of setting-in-order, which sets upon [*stelli*] nature. It sets upon it in the sense of challenging it. Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry. Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium, for example uranium is set upon to yield atomic energy.’

17 Amaro and Khan (n 15).

18 Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (University of Minnesota Press 2018).

conserved, but the event that led to the material destruction of the statue, the sense that change is possible, not confined only to the spectacle of short-lived protest. Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol, has offered a useful diagnosis of post-Colston Bristol. He played up the symbolic value of the fall for the city’s large Afro-Caribbean population, whilst also being quick to recognise that substantive political change ought to follow. (The tone of his arguments strikes a disappointingly—but unsurprisingly—moderate chord, the language of the piecemeal and not the revolutionary.) ‘It was an iconic moment’, Rees told the *Guardian*, ‘[but] I think we need to be careful with it. The danger is that iconic moments of great symbolic value occupy the space that should be filled by substantial action.’ Rees is right. The point is to change the world, not to contemplate it, or to contemplate posting about changing it. Unsurprisingly, after Black Lives Matter had evaporated from our timelines, we found that nothing had changed. Rees correctly noted that change takes work:

Symbols are important, but I didn’t get a memo on my desk the next day or the next week telling me racial equalities around mental health, school exclusions, criminal justice systems and educational outcomes had changed. It’s very important we make sure all symbolic acts are firmly attached to real change, real policy change.<sup>19</sup>

To the plinth. Perhaps the most representative self-caricature of wokeness that emerged from last year’s race protests was *A Surge of Power* (2020), the statue undemocratically installed atop (and swiftly removed from) Colston’s empty plinth by contemporary artist Marc Quinn. The sculpture is cast from an image of Bristolian Black Lives Matter protester Jen Reid, her arm aloft in the manner of a Black Power salute. At first glance, it appears to be an image of resistance, of the defiant stand of an ordinary Black woman against a racist, patriarchal power structure, channeling the symbolic power of the civil rights movement and the Black Panthers at once. To paraphrase Adorno, the concept of antiracism is here incapable of exhausting the object of racism conceived. Upon closer inspection, this ostensibly antiracist anti-monument is but a thin veneer for a lurking White supremacy. It is a monument to weak antiracism.

Let us begin with the most obvious objection to the work. Marc Quinn is far from intimate with the struggles at hand. He is a White, middle-class, Cambridge-educated artist belonging to that most unwanted of art-historical categories, the Young British Artists (YBAs). Critically undressed in the early noughties by the Marxist art historian Julian Stallabrass and others, the YBAs stand for the worst of neoliberal capitalist artistic production. Stallabrass calls them ‘Art Incorporated’.<sup>20</sup> They produce large, loud, loutish, expensive, and opportunistic art for the ill-informed, and this work is no exception. That Quinn is a White artist is not necessarily a problem. But that his sculpture was, by his own admission, produced on a whim having followed national television coverage of the event from a distance, speaks volumes. It goes without saying that the decision to replace or not replace the statue of Colston should be one for the people of Bristol, not for Quinn. That he frames this work as ‘collaborative’ is insulting: as earnest as Reid’s antiracism is, her opinions do not necessarily represent those of all Bristolians. The imposition of the statue takes on a more sinister dimension when we consider that Quinn’s former partner and muse, Jenny Bastet, a Black

19 As quoted in Steven Morris, ‘Marvin Rees, mayor of Bristol: “Symbolic acts should be linked to change”’ *Guardian* (12 January 2021).

20 Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art* (rev and expanded edn, Verso Books 2006).

woman, accused Quinn of being an ‘oppressor’ who ‘exploited’ and ‘objectified’ her body.<sup>21</sup> Biographical disqualifications aside, *A Surge of Power* is little more than Instagrammable antiracism in sculptural form. It is a gimmick that does little to work for antiracist struggle, and that is incommensurate with the real work that needs to be done to ‘defend the dead’ or ‘tend to the Black dead and dying’.

## Conclusions

How, then, to proceed? What alternatives do we suggest to popular woke antiracism? We might attempt to answer these questions by anticipating the inevitably hackneyed, decontextualised criticisms that follow when wading into public debate on antiracism. These are accusations of cynicism, class reductionism, and, worse still, racism.

Firstly, for cynicism. We reiterate here that we fully support the outpouring of antiracist and anticapitalist desire that saw Colston fall. The problem with antiracist activism at present is not its inability to undertake symbolically meaningful direct action, but rather to convert symbolically meaningful direct action to politically and socially meaningful direct action. It must capitalise on the momentum of the antiracist moment in order to force substantial, structural change, as opposed to stultifying and hypostatising its momentum through the reification of an aestheticised antiracist position of wokeness. How we remember the fall of Colston is as significant as the fall of Colston itself: if the moment is frozen, if it is musealised or monumentalised as a heritage object that belongs only to the past, its active political potential wanes.

Secondly, for class reductionism. We make no apologies for suggesting that the question of race ought to be articulated in concert with questions of class and gender, even if race, or White onto-epistemology, is a priori to questions of class and gender. There is space for a rearticulated intersectional politics that, rather than atomising these categories, rather than compelling people to identify with a set of positive identity characteristics and to let those positive identity characteristics inform our political praxis, unites us in the *negative*, that makes us ask: what do we *hate* in common? And how do we get rid of it?

Finally, for racism, that which we hate. Accusations of racism could be made on the grounds that we critique and therefore undermine the political value of Black Lives Matter and popular antiracism. However, these fall down as soon as we understand that popular antiracist activism distracts us from organising against the true object of critique, racial capitalism. Such organisation must not be a simple split from racial capitalism that only succeeds in buttressing the structures of racial capitalism and, by extension, white supremacy.

Our readers might have one final, quite reasonable, objection. Having undermined the political significance of the fall of Colston, what do we suppose is next for the city of Bristol? For that question we have no immediate answer. That is for Bristolians—not a single Bristolian—to decide. We only hope that their decision captures the spirit of the fall and not of the failed politics that followed.

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<sup>21</sup> Kadish Morris, ‘Marc Quinn’s Black Lives Matter Statue Is Not Solidarity’ (*Art Review*, 21 July 2020). We share the views Morris expresses in this article. The quotations are from Bastet’s Instagram account, and were corroborated by the satirical social media account *The White Pub*, which received a statement in support of Bastet from a group of former employees of Marc Quinn.