

The 1919 'race riots' – within and beyond exceptional moments in South Shields and Glasgow

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Abstract

Historicising riots is a challenging process. Balancing the characterisation of violent trauma alongside the longer trajectories of associated grievances, and acts of contestation, poses representational tensions for associated scholars. Emphasis, both in contemporary sources and recent scholarship, upon exceptional episodes of violence potentially overplays the particularity of the event, and perhaps detracts from the recognition of smaller, less visible, and everyday acts of exclusion and contestation. In this paper, we propose to revisit the 1919 British seaport riots through a political geography lens, considering continuities and variations in the experiences, trajectories and contexts of the events in South Shields and Glasgow. Theoretically, we draw upon intersecting work within cultural studies, history and geography to reflect upon critical space-time geographies in relation to the political atmospheres of violent events. This facilitates an engagement with a variety of sources to characterise the 1919 riots, including trade union records, Colonial Office documents, newspaper reports and police records. We argue that bringing together these archival materials allows a recognition of the heterogeneity of experience associated with seemingly exceptional episodes of racialised violence.

INTRODUCTION

A serious disturbance, which at moments amounted to riot, occurred yesterday afternoon at Broomielaw, Glasgow [...] was the scene of furious fighting between white and coloured sailors and firemen [...] A large and hostile crowd of British seamen and white sailors of other nationalities followed the coloured men to their lodging-house to which they ran for refuge.

Edinburgh Evening News, 24th January 1919

Turbulent scenes, the likes of which have never before been seen in South Shields were witnessed at the Mill Dam yesterday [...] in an incredibly short space of time hundreds of people became involved in a fierce conflict [...] A number of Arabs were arrested in connection to the affair.

Shields Daily News, 5th February 1919

Historicising riots is a challenging process. Balancing the characterisation of violent trauma alongside the longer trajectories of associated grievances, and acts of contestation, poses representational tensions. Emphasis, both in contemporary sources and recent scholarship, upon exceptional episodes of violence, arguably overplays the particularity of the event, and perhaps detracts from the recognition of smaller, less visible, and everyday acts of exclusion. Such particularities might also downplay the significance of counter narratives as constitutive of the longer trajectories and atmospheres of racialisation. In this paper, we propose to revisit the 1919 British seaport riots through a historical geography lens. This lens, we argue, allows a critical and relational analysis of such events, foregrounding the political atmospheres of racism and violence as found in early twentieth century South Shields and Glasgow (see also Jenkinson, 2009).

As introduced above, the seaport riots of 1919 were, in part, the expression of multiple dissatisfactions and grievances associated with the transition from war to peace (Jenkinson, 2009). The violence and wider experiences though, challenge the notion of simple transition. The events and their wider making indicate how social hostility and antagonism remained present throughout the First World War and how racism was highly prevalent within early twentieth century Britain more broadly. The events highlighted above were the first in a series of ‘race riots’ which took place across Britain in 1919, with further notable violence taking place in Cardiff (June 1919) and Liverpool (July 1919), as well as similar scenes occurring in Newport, Barry and London.

Such scenes were also prevalent internationally in 1919, with racialised violence prominent across America, including the Chicago riots where 38 people died during the ‘Red Summer’, and conflicts also emerging in the Caribbean (Martin, 1974; Evans, 2001). The language of ‘riots’ was prevalent in the descriptions of contemporary newspapers and is replicated in some prominent historical works on the events (Fryer, 2010; Jenkinson, 2009). In this paper we revisit these riots through an analysis in two sites and look to unpack their wider meaning and connections. In doing so, we wish to present a politicised understanding of the ‘race riots’, situating the events within and beyond their immediacy, through wider contexts and atmospheres of racialised injustice.

The violent scenes across Britain in 1919 differed in nature, scale and the composition of those involved, but held a commonality in that the conflicts centred upon seafaring communities. In Glasgow, the 'disturbance' documented above took place between white workers and a group of seafarers from Sierra Leone (30 of whom were arrested). In South Shields, the violence again included white workers, this time in conflict with seafarers from Aden (several of whom were similarly arrested). Tellingly, the violence took place between communities who all held claims to Britishness, albeit with significantly differing power relations in making such claims. As noted above, the events were connected to a 'a transnational context of white supremacist violence' whilst also informing solidarities and resistance, through black activism and activists, such as Rufus Fennell who organised and campaigned for the rights of black and Arab British subjects in Cardiff during 1919 (Featherstone, 2018: 56, see also Høgsbjerg, 2014).

In introducing this paper, we note the prominence of centenaries and anniversaries as opportunities to revisit and reimagine violent and racialised events. 2019 marked the centenary year of the riots and several public facing responses emerged, including the Great War to Race Riots walks in Liverpool and wider media coverage of other sites of rioting such as Cardiff (From Great War to Race Riots, 2019; Museum of Cardiff, 2019). In this regard, centenaries provide crucial opportunities for reflection, as Wilson (2010: 165) demonstrates in his work on the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery in Britain, 'where the previously ignored, suppressed or forgotten histories' can be revisited. In these terms, centenaries provide the impetus not only for the public to 'be informed or reminded of a history that contributed to the shaping of the nation, but to a widespread feeling that this history needed also to be understood' (Cubitt, 2009: 260).

We argue that an attentiveness to a broader political geography of violence, through antagonistic atmospheres, reveals a wider ranging and important set of historical experiences associated with these scenes. Atmospheres are helpful for capturing some of the different modalities of racism found in early twentieth century Britain. Closs Stephens (2016: 182) unpacks atmospheres in relation to nationalism, indicating how 'national feelings cannot be traced back to a single sovereign source but rather emanate from multiple constituencies as part of a nebulous, diffuse atmosphere.' Usefully, Antonsich (2016: 33) suggests that related approaches might also consider a more agentic and everyday sense of nationalism through multiple perspectives in order to capture how 'nationhood is made meaningful by these diverse participants'. Here, we look to unpack some of the connections between atmospheres, whiteness and nation to explore the violence of 1919.

Whilst documenting exclusions is a key aim of the paper, our research also foregrounds alternative visions and active resistance during these times, including those of white women and societies within the communities, which contested the hostile relations noted above (see also Frost, 2008). Similarly, the paper notes smaller acts of violence, as well as more general conditions, which reflected a wider presence of racism within the places considered. As commented on further below, this links with critical thinking around race, violence and the political (Hall et al., 1978; Featherstone, 2018; Kelliher,

2020). Given the salience of racialised violence and the emotive nature of reviving such histories, we begin our discussion with reflections on a theoretical framework to understand such moments. Following this, the paper briefly comments on methodology, and capturing experiences within the archive, before revisiting the histories of riots through three 'cuts'. In doing so, our commentary concludes with some reflections on riots as violent events, and links to approaches that trouble a singular narrative of their making (Shaw, 2012).

REVISITING RIOTS: SPATIAL POLITICS AND TEMPORALITIES

The justification for using materials from South Shields and Glasgow is in part pragmatic as the contributions below fit within larger research projects within each place but also serves as an addition to ongoing and complimentary historical work within Cardiff and Liverpool (Heneghan and Onuora, 2017). The bringing together of materials has a rationale though, as both regions (North East England and Central Belt Scotland) arguably lack a minority presence within their dominant historical and cultural narratives. This can lead to a historical and contemporary discussion of race and racism where the presence and experiences of minority communities, particularly those insights which might be considered everyday or banal, are notably absent (Peterson, 2020). Our argument below is that these pasts must be a usable part of the public history of both places, but importantly that these histories should not be presented as isolated or singular, and instead as reflective of political connections and atmospheres.

We suggest that the bringing together of two interconnected sites of racialised violence is indicative of the connections between the riots and other events and experiences. This contributes towards our wider theoretical framing, stressing the space-time geography of events, difference and the formation of exclusions. Our argument emphasises this sense of political connectivity, through the role of national trade unionism for example, but also aims to attribute a sense of difference by acknowledging the distinctive features of the events themselves. Drawing together experiences from seemingly exceptional or spectacular riots alongside apparently everyday encounters allows a more nuanced and reflexive account of the events, their contexts and wider meaning.

The emphasis here upon multiplicity is not to undermine the works of previous historical accounts, but to nuance and extend such analyses. Peter Fryer (2010: 301-303), for example, includes a historical analysis of 1919 in *Staying Power*, noting how 'an anti-black reign of terror raged in Liverpool' for three days. Similarly, Jenkinson (2009) provides a detailed account of the riots themselves and their contexts across Britain. Tabili (2011) has helpfully pointed to a longer history of migration and connectivity, specifically in the South Shields context, and called for more recognition of 1919 as part of 'profound cultural and political shifts, of which the riots proved merely spectacular symptoms' (Tabili, 2009: n.p.). Our contribution builds upon Tabili's sentiment and looks to combine the contributions above alongside archival fragments that reveal related experiences during these times.

This framing speaks to a much wider relevance of the events themselves, revealing empirical vignettes from daily life and moments connected to the riots. For example, our discussion

foregrounds circulating influences, such as trade union newspapers, speeches and petitions, as well as other violent encounters, such as street confrontations. Indeed, the empirical materials below deliberately foreground multiple spaces and places within which racism was influential. These include spaces associated with employment, domesticity and leisure. Employing this approach indicates how the riots can be read alongside other events and experiences, as Highmore (2002: 3) argues, 'the non-everyday (the exceptional) is there to be found in the heart of the everyday', and indeed vice-versa.

Before revisiting the relevant archival materials associated with the events of 1919 in South Shields and Glasgow further, we wish to conceptually frame our contribution in relation to two interrelated bodies of literature, firstly historical works at the intersection of race and class, and secondly, space-time geographies to critically develop our characterisations of events, riots and spontaneity. Our engagements include a reading of Black British Cultural Studies, before critically considering the space-time geographies of events and encounters, with an emphasis upon those relating to race and class. These reflections frame our approach to revisiting the 1919 riots as connected moments with wider spatial and temporal significance.

Race, Class and Historical Geographies

In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy comments upon the methodological nationalism of prominent British historians EP Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, recognising their contributions whilst foregrounding their limitations. He describes their work as reflective of 'problems within English cultural studies' and identifies the 'wider difficulties with nationalism and with the discursive slippage or connotative resonance between "race", ethnicity, and nation' (Gilroy, 1993: 14). By highlighting a spatial flaw and empirical gap within the history from below tradition, Gilroy exposed a significant absence within histories of the left (Bressey, 2015; Featherstone and Griffin, 2016). His illumination of a methodological slippage that fails to unpack the makings of nation and race within the makings of class, reflected a broader trend within labour histories that have often distinguished between class and race histories. Tyler Stovall (2012) pushes this point further by stressing the need to combine and examine intersections within and between race, gender and class histories. He discourages an adjunctive approach to this, arguing instead that it is the combination of these elements that reveals most. This approach is apparent in his accounts of 1919 Paris whereby he stresses that 'one must define not only who belongs, but also who does not, in order to create a sense of group cohesion and solidarity' (Stovall, 2012: 112).

In this regard, Virdee (2014) has stressed the importance of revisiting working class histories with an emphasis upon race and racialisation to reveal the historical presence of minority others. He notes key events within British working class history to foreground the contributions and experience of black and ethnic minority communities. Importantly his approach foregrounds both acts of solidarity (including the Seamen's Minority Movement in South Shields) and the formation of racialised exclusions (including the events of 1919). Such an emphasis foregrounds questions regarding place-based histories, to consider whose stories are included and on what terms they are presented. His work indicates how the

retelling of race and class histories matters in a political sense of usable pasts and public history making (see also Bressey, 2014; Griffin, 2018). He argues, in a similar vein to Stovall, for an avoidance of additive approaches whereby race becomes an adjunct to wider labour histories.

With this in mind, the contributions found within Stuart Hall's work are crucial for revisiting the conjuncture associated with the events of 1919. His theoretical contributions have been situated alongside Gramsci's thinking, to illuminate 'the currents within any historical moment, and the nature of the social forces in place' (Grayson and Little, 2017: 62). Hall positioned race relations, antagonisms and exclusions in an analysis that reflected a wider commitment to exploring the notion of conjuncture:

[O]ne is then obliged to agree that race relations are directly linked with economic processes [...]The problem here is not whether economic structures are relevant to racial divisions but how the two are theoretically connected. Can the economic level provide an adequate and sufficient level of explanation of the racial features of the social formations? (Hall, 1996: 19-20)

Notably, he argues for contextualised accounts of race and racism, famously arguing for what Virdee (2014: 4) describes as 'there can be no general theory of racism, only historically specific racisms'. To do so, his work strived to consider the 'specific conditions' that makes racial characteristics 'socially pertinent' and 'historically active' (Hall, 1996: 52). Here we suggest that there is a geography to this call for a further engagement with situated racisms and that the specific conditions require a spatial and temporal reflection. As such, we aim to revisit 1919 with an attentiveness to the longer trajectories which inform 'specific conditions', the varying spaces, places and communications that develop the distinction as 'socially pertinent', as well as a sensitivity to the specific triggers, spatial connections and legacies of the events themselves which recognises their making as 'historically active'. In doing so, we build upon established historical work on the events of 1919, but in a manner that foregrounds a wider set of connected experiences.

This emphasis upon a wider realm of associated experiences aims to revisit the political geographies of violence in British ports during 1919. This characterisation draws upon the work of Hall et al. (1978: 340) in *Policing the Crisis* whereby they note, in their reflections upon discrimination and the experiences of black youth, the need to engage with 'what the regular and routine structures are and what their effects have been'. It is this attentiveness to the repetition and regularity of violent practices, rather than the particularity of riots, that inform the histories of exclusionary atmospheres considered below. Importantly though, this violence is not presented as singular or uncontested. In attending to a plurality of experiences the paper considers how violent conditions and practices are contested and resisted (Kelliher, 2020). This approach links with recent geographical work on violence and antagonism, such as Featherstone's (2018) revisiting of 1919 to show how Caribbean sailors resisted violence experienced in Cardiff, through transnational routes and connections.

To develop this approach, some recent historical geography work on solidarities, conferences and activism is insightful, revealing how race and class dynamics have intersected in solidaristic and transatlantic ways. Notable contributions from geographers such as Featherstone (2012) and Davies (2012) have indicated the transnational nature of place-based histories and have stretched analyses of particular historical moments through close engagements with connections, communications and solidarities. This attentiveness to spatiality, within and beyond particular sites, and through key events, performances and actors is key to our approach towards the events of 1919.

Prominent labour historians have attended to some of the related geographies through their work on 'whiteness' within labour politics (Roediger, 1993:132). Lake and Reynolds (2008: 3-4) contextualise the events considered here within an international formulation of a 'global colour line' that 'spread 'whiteness' as a transnational form of racial identification. Their book surveys the early twentieth century to reveal how 'emotions and ideas, people and publications, racial knowledge and technologies [...] animated white men's countries and their strategies of exclusion, deportation and segregation. Hyslop (1999) has similarly considered the circulating ideology of 'white labourism' in significant depth, specifically linking Britain, Australia and South Africa as countries where a shared imperial solidarity built upon exclusionary politics developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As such, we look to encourage an approach that similarly thinks within and beyond place-based forms of organised labour as an influence within the riots of 1919.

Rethinking Spontaneity: Space-Time Geographies of Events

Ranjihit Guha's critical interpretations of spontaneity provide a useful bridge between the readings considered above and the approach to the 1919 materials provided below. In particular, the subaltern historian's critique foregrounds the need to politicise and unpack seemingly impulsive events:

There is no room for pure spontaneity in history. This is precisely where they err who fail to recognize the trace of consciousness in the apparently unstructured movement of the masses. The error derives more often than not from two nearly interchangeable notions of organization and politics. (Guha, 1983: 5)

Spontaneity is often misplaced in characterisations of protest and revolt, resulting in a failure to acknowledge the broader circumstances which create the conditions for different forms of agency. In contrast, Guha (1983: 9) emphasised the 'political' nature of the sometimes violent peasant uprisings in India, between 1783 and 1900, which he considered as in no way being a consequence of 'absent-mindedness' when placed against the subordination experienced under the revitalisation of landlordism and money lending in rural India under British colonial rule.

It is this reflexive and nuanced approach to 'critical space-time geographies' (Schwanen and Kwan, 2012) that we seek to enhance by developing a relational approach to place-based experiences, including a wider set of experiences beyond the immediacy of the notable event, in this case riots. Schwanen and Kwan (2012: 2045) draw upon Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) to suggest how 'it is from complex interactions between multiple processes

across different time scales and geographical contexts that lived experiences of social differentiation and inequalities [...] emerge'. In this regard, critical reflections on space-time geographies are useful in general terms for unravelling the spatial dynamics of complex events and noting relationships between pasts, presents and futures (May and Thrift, 2001). More specifically for the events considered here, we utilise Carby's processual framing of race, as a 'verb not a noun', and 'a practice or a series of practices, a technology that calculates and assigns differences to peoples and communities and then institutionalizes these differences' (Carby, 2019: 65). The paper looks to attend to the space-times of such practices in South Shields and Glasgow during 1919.

White Lives by Bridget Byrne (2006) is especially pertinent here due to its emphasis upon the variable and dynamic experiences of race and gender. Her work engages with white mothers in London and articulates multiple and variable experiences of race. Byrne stresses the importance of 'hearing and seeing 'race' in contexts where it is not explicitly felt as present'. Her characterisation begins to reveal a wider realm of race relations, to include more mundane and everyday interactions, whilst also acknowledging circulating influences and emergent practices. With a similar stress upon the significance of the everyday, Clayton (2009) captures the relationship between place and racialisation in his study of inter-ethnic relations in Leicester:

The context of place is not merely a setting against which inter-ethnic relations are played out, rather it is actively employed through articulations and practices of belonging to mark out differences and similarities and make sense of everyday circumstance. (Clayton, 2009: 488-9)

Here we similarly argue that place matters to the temporalities of racialised exclusions which emerged in 1919. Riots were violent, mobile, fast paced, and undoubtedly held an intangible combination of both spontaneous triggers and structural, accumulating contributors. Whilst each riot was a significant development with immediate consequences within each port space, the events were also part of wider transnational violence during these times and their influence was connected with longer lasting and far reaching rippling impacts (Jenkinson, 2009). We elaborate on this below by engaging with the complex and multiple space-time geographies during 1919 in South Shields and Glasgow.

This approach allows a critical questioning of what makes some events 'matter', whilst also indicating how other events and experiences receive comparatively less historical attention. Thus, an engagement with agency and experience within the wider sphere of everyday life in moments linked to, or associated with, the riots become important. Geographical works are again salient here, with Valentine (2008) for example noting the conceptual utility of 'encounter' to foreground the lived experiences of 'living with difference'. Her approach notes the potential for 'micro-publics of everyday life', spaces such as the street and home, which can act as a site of potentiality and notably foster engagements with 'otherness'.

Within such encounters and spaces, Nayak (2017: 289) notes the significance of power relations through 'topographies of power ... that disrupt the melody of multicultural conviviality'. He is keen to foreground how spaces of encounter must also include 'the

friction that accompanies what are often unsettling encounters'. Fundamentally, his work calls for an acknowledgment of a much wider characterisation of racialised encounter, to foreground the 'bumpiness' of 'everyday racism'. In attempt to capture this wider realm of experience, beyond the notable event, our focus is upon the dynamic relationships between the exceptional and the everyday, in this case the riot and surrounding everyday experiences and encounters. As indicated in our title, thinking within and beyond the 1919 riots is proposed as a method of representation with a more nuanced characterisation in mind.

Here we would acknowledge that the 'everyday' experiences we consider are limited by their archival presence, and equally their absence, and thus can only provide a series of relevant 'cuts' into everyday life which can be difficult to trace within the historical record (Hodder, 2017). As such, we draw upon Wemyss's (2006) work on Britishness and tolerance in East London and how she looked 'to follow the flow of events and associated discourses' associated with a violent attack on Quddus Ali and the wider political successes of the far-right British National Party in 1994. Importantly, her work looked to consider 'cultural' occasions that had no obvious political link to the violent moment considered. This approach provides a relational characterisation of circulating influences which inform, in multiple and uncertain ways, the formation of political moments and endure in everyday spaces beyond events.

Laurie and Shaw (2018: 8) similarly note the significance of structural and cultural violence, alongside the harm of direct acts of violence, to what they describe as 'violent conditions'. They note how 'violent conditions burn in the background of daily life' and it is this wider realm that we seek to capture in our analysis of the 1919 riots. This approach can also be linked to Shaw's (2012: 624) notion of an 'evental geography', which provides a methodological prompt 'to probe beneath what is obviously seen, felt, and heard, to discover what objects are marginalized to enable the existent world to appear'. In this regard, the historical presence of violence in port spaces is indicative of processes of exclusion and hostility that were more widely prevalent, spatially and temporally, in these places. As noted in the introductory exerts, in January 1919, the Broomielaw area of Glasgow, and the following month at the Mill Dam in South Shields, seafarer communities were involved in violent racialised confrontations. These events were informed by much longer lasting trajectories of racialised organising and community practices, centring upon workers' rights, societal relations and changing cultures. Asserting this wider presence of 'violent conditions' alongside a more critical reading of spontaneity as introduced above, is important for revisiting the riots, as these hostilities did not simply surface during the moments of violence. We argue that attending to the wider contexts of violence is crucial for thinking through events as usable pasts, and riots as imagined geographies (Benwell et al., 2020)

The bringing together of the above literatures allows the following conceptual threads to be traced through our empirical reflections. We aim to deploy a relational approach to think within and beyond the racialised violence found within port places in 1919, to engage with spatial-temporal contexts, key actors in the formation of the events alongside wider

contributing factors, contestations, and longer trajectories. This disrupts linear understandings of causality or singularity in understanding the events themselves and instead provides a more complex and contested characterisation of early twentieth century port spaces. Through this wider historical framing, we engage with the distinctiveness of port spaces by developing a micro-historical approach. We recognise here the need to document both the particularity and severity of an event but suggest that positioning the event alongside closely connected experiences and actions is vital for a more progressive approach, particularly when framed as a method of usable past making. This emphasis upon a wider atmosphere, through everyday spaces practices and experiences, attends to events and actions that may not have been deemed as significant or related to the riots themselves, but instead reveals a wider influence of the discourse associated with the making of the events.

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF EVENTS: METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Methodologically, the paper draws upon a variety of sources and archives to characterise the riots. These include trade union records, Colonial Office documents, newspaper reports and police records from The National Archives and The Modern Records Centre, as well as more local collections, such as The Word in South Shields and The Archive Centre at Glasgow Caledonian University. Working with disparate and fragmentary archives can be challenging, and even more so when attempting to trace everyday experiences. Newspaper reports have proved particularly helpful for uncovering a wider set of experiences circulating close to the riots themselves. Understanding this evidence through the lens of the everyday has allowed more mundane experiences to be considered as co-constitutive of moments of violent disorder. Our methodology links to feminist perspectives in historical geography research (Domosh and Morin, 2003) and acknowledges how everyday experiences have been racialised, gendered and marginalised in the archival record (McDonagh, 2018).

With these threads in mind, we have identified a wider set of archival materials of relevance to understanding 1919. This methodological shift has been informed by the reading above and the conceptual understanding of events, atmospheres and situated racism. Rather than focusing on the immediacy of events we have deliberately broadened our archival remit to include a wider, more speculative, series of moments, documents and actors. The following empirical discussion is structured around three 'cuts' for thinking within and beyond the 1919 seaport riots. Firstly, we contextualise the riots through engagements with events and rhetoric within and beyond the moments of disorder (conditions as context), secondly we consider the presence of antagonisms within and beyond racialised riots (co-existing and related events), before finally contemplating wider connections within and beyond the places and sites of violence (space-time connections and legacies).

CUT 1: CONTEXTUALISING RIOTS - WITHIN AND BEYOND EXCEPTIONAL MOMENTS OF DISORDER

The riots reflected tensions circulating amongst those present within the port spaces considered but were also connected to wider political processes. The apparent triggers for the riots were similar in both instances with newspaper reports attributing the riots to work related grievances and difficulties in signing on for work on ships:

White and Black seamen in conflict...Man shot: Other two stabbed...There had been some chaff between the parties and this led to ultimately a challenge being issued by one of the blacks who expressed his willingness to "take on" any of the opposing faction. (*Daily Record*, 24th January 1919)

The trouble seems to have arisen through a dispute which occurred during the signing on of a crew at the South Shields Shipping Office, when an Arab seaman, who had presented himself for engagement, was informed that only white men were required for the crew. (*Shields Daily News*, 5th February 1919)

Reports in Glasgow indicated that the 'chaff' took place in the yard of the mercantile marine office and came at a time where sailors were seeking work. Events were similar in South Shields whereby the South Shields' Arab community took grievance with racist hiring practices within the local employment hub, the Mill Dam. Newspapers reported that 'it was becoming increasingly difficult to obtain employment in British ships, despite the fact that they were British subjects, that have filled gaps in British crews during the war and that they belong to a recognised trade union' (*Shields Daily News*, 5th February 1919). Matters reached a climax on February 4th when an Arab crew was 'turned down'. When one of the Arab's protested the injustice, J. Fye, an American born Seaman's Union official, replied aggressively 'You black bastards this ship is not for you!' Fye's positionality, as a recently naturalised British subject and trade union official, also reflects some of the more intimate ways in which racism and globally connected events were enabled and enacted by individuals (Tabili, 2009).

Such reporting highlights the overt racism associated with the immediacy of the events. This violence is well documented, discussed and increasingly well recognised in contemporary place-based histories (Virdee, 2014). Arrests were made in both instances, with black and Arab seafarers disproportionately arrested. In some cases, it was argued that this was for the sailors' own protection (Jenkinson, 2009). Here we seek to raise some of the related conditions to disrupt associations between riot and spontaneity and to reveal a wider space-time geography of the violence which took place. As noted above, Hall's understanding of situated racism and Guha's politicised understanding of spontaneity indicates the need to consider the economic and political dynamics associated with riots, as opposed to an isolated reading of the events.

In her historiography of 1919, Jenkinson (2009) surveys the national context for the riots including high levels of unemployment and the links with military demobilisation, whilst also recognising racialised trade union responses. We raise some evidence from the case studies considered that reflect this wider atmosphere of hostility and indicate a longer lasting and growing resentment based around race amongst seafaring areas of Britain. As noted in the introduction, Closs Stephens' (2016) understanding of atmosphere informs this approach by

stressing how an engagement with the multifaceted nature of experiences and feelings encourages us to rethink the shaping of collective publics. Empirically, this facilitates a wider engagement with archival materials to foreground contextual conditions, circulating influences and connected events.

Economic conditions in 1919 were marked by rising unemployment with 47, 498 people requiring out of work donations in Glasgow in early 1919 (*Forward*, 5th April 1919). 6.5 million demobilised servicemen had returned home to find conditions which were far from the 'land fit for heroes' that Lloyd George had promised in his 1918 election campaign. In response to these circumstances, the Merchant Shipping industry which brought many Adenese, Somali, West African and West Indian seafarers to live and work in Britain, became increasingly hostile and sometimes violent towards their presence (Jenkinson, 2009). This potential for racialised exclusion within the industry emerged from processes formed above, in terms of state and employer, and below, through trade unionism and communities.

These conditions were situated alongside longer lasting labour grievances within the seafaring industry, particularly regarding wages paid to Chinese labour in the early twentieth century. Related trade unions documented these grievances:

The wages paid to Chinamen, engaged in ports in the United Kingdom are £3.10 per month as against £5.10 for white men. The shipowners say the food of the Britisher costs 1/6 d per day, whereas the food of the Asiatic costs only eightpence or ninepence per day.¹

Whilst occurring under distinctive economic conditions, we suggest that the racialised violence cannot be considered through a linear notion of economic causality. Instead, the responses to these conditions must be positioned as an event within wider political, social and cultural atmospheres of racism, whereby violent and threatening language, hostile relationships and exclusionary positions can be traced over a much longer time period. Thinking within and beyond the riots allows a temporal exploration of the riots to frame their formation as being informed and politicised by an enduring racialised rhetoric emerging from key working class organisers, emerging primarily from within the seafaring unions.

The longer history of publications and records of public speaking from prominent seafaring trade unions, notably the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union (NSFU) and British Seafarers' Union (BSU), are illustrative of the organised labour response and a longer trajectory of racialised grievances that can be traced through senior trade union leaders before the First World War. In Glasgow, the *Forward* newspaper published trade union views on the issue of foreign labour competition:

I do not hate Asiatics; but quite frankly and candidly I don't want to see them coming here on British ships. I would excuse them. So long as they are on these ships, they are a danger to British seamen. Their standard of living, such as it is, is imperilled. The

¹ Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, National Union of Seamen Archives, MSS.175/3/14/1-2

Asiatic is not being employed because he is more efficient. He is not half so efficient as the white man.

(‘Seamen’s Grievances’, *Forward*, 8th April 1911)

Such rhetoric was prominent within early twentieth century trade union documentation, reflecting longer lasting grievances and a racialised political response to the economic conditions raised above (see also Griffin, 2015). These words were specifically tied to the places of interest in this paper. The leader of the NSFU, Joseph Havelock Wilson, known locally as ‘the seaman’s candidate’ (*Shields Daily News*, 12th October 1918), was elected as South Shields Member of Parliament in December 1918 (Craig, 1983). Wilson was known for holding racist and anti-Semitic views (Sherwood, 1991). His xenophobic position was multifaceted as evidenced in his strong anti-German stance during the First World War. This patriotic rhetoric during the war, Wilson also refused to allow British delegates to the 1917 Peace Conference on British ships, can also be linked to attacks upon German shops across the North East in December 1914 (Byrne, 1994).

At the NSFU Annual General Meeting in September 1919, Wilson made his sentiments about non-white seafarers clear in his presidential address. He questioned their character and quality of their work, stating ‘that during the war coloured men were brought here in very large numbers, encouraged in one way or another by their friends and the big wages offered, and those coloured men were not a very reasonable body of men to deal with’, whilst also likening these sailors to children.² His views on the matter were explicit, stating ‘the coloured man was not wanted, and the neutral alien was not wanted’.³ Throughout his electoral campaign in late 1919 he frequently employed divisive, imperialistic and patriotic ideologies.

Such comments were in line with the racism present in South Shields, expressed through violence in some instances, and Wilson’s wider association with white labourism (Featherstone, 2012). In Glasgow, Emanuel Shinwell led the breakaway formation of a new seafaring union, the BSU in 1911. Shinwell was a strike leader during Clydeside’s 1919 forty hours movement and went on to become a Member of Parliament, Secretary of State for War, and Minister of Fuel and Power. During the early twentieth century, he consistently argued that the seafarer grievances were primarily against the Chinese workers, claiming that they were directed towards the undercutting of wages by Chinese labour competition. Audience members at connected rallies suggested otherwise though, as noted when questioned in court following the arrest of forty hour working week organisers. During questioning, a seafaring delegate claimed that ‘[h]e remembered Mr Shinwell addressing a meeting of seamen, about 200 in number, in James Watt Lane on January 30th. The main subject of the address was the employment of yellow labour on a boat at Glasgow and the employment of black labour’ (*Evening Times*, 16th April 1919).

² Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, National Union of Seamen Archives MSS.175A/1. Proceedings of annual and special general meetings. Presidential address, Annual General Meeting, 22 September 1919, p.12

³ Ibid, p.13

These responses of union members to a speech which took place shortly after the Broomielaw riot are significant and perhaps reveal the audience's impression of a politicised and racialised message as opposed to the leadership's official statements that often aimed to articulate, at least officially, a discretely economic framing. Shinwell himself, when commenting on the Broomielaw riots, noted that 'evidently some Chinese sailors had also arrived in Glasgow at the same time, and the black men got the benefit of any ill-feeling directed against the Chinese' (cited in Jenkinson, 2008: 42). This insight again points to a trade union position of racism. Importantly though, this racism was differentiated by Shinwell's own status as a high-profile Jewish Labour leader. His leadership of the BSU distanced itself from the anti-Semitism of Wilson and the NSFU, but continued to align on a shared articulation of workers' rights in terms of whiteness (Virdee, 2014). Inflammatory remarks towards non-white workers indicated the racialisation of workers of colour with derogatory language being used within labour communications and documentation during this time. Although such insights cannot be positioned as a simple explanation for the events of 1919, the response of organised labour begins to reflect a wider atmosphere of racism(s) and some of the differentiations within the political spaces considered.

The combination of events and influences is presented to begin to disrupt distinctions between mundane and exceptional events and to consider the experiences within and beyond the riots of 1919. The 'race riots' were everyday encounters, with both instances linked to the process of signing on for work, that took on exceptional meaning, through rioting, but this dynamic was not spontaneous. This moment was influenced by numerous political, economic and cultural threads which we do not claim to exhaustively cover here, but instead to indicate how events can be contextualised in relation to wider processes and inequalities, what Nayak (2017) describes as the 'friction that accompanies unsettling encounters'. Our approach has foregrounded the wider links and vectors which contributed to this formation of exclusionary working class politics in a similar manner to those proposed by the labour historians noted above. In particular, the articulation of whiteness from labour leadership can be directly connected with the places of hostility. In the next section, the paper considers how this friction played out in multiple ways and was an important part of place-based politics in 1919.

CUT 2: WITHIN AND BEYOND RACIALISED ANTAGONISMS – CO-EXISTING EXPERIENCES AND EVENTS

Historical geographer Carl Griffin (2008: 142) provides a transformative sense of space within crowd gatherings and protest movements by stressing that the 'very existence of a crowd, whether ceremonial or protesting, is not only something that briefly turns the social world upside down but also something that transforms the space it briefly inhabits'. It is this transformative and dynamic understanding that we seek to unpack further in 1919 by engaging with the wider presence of violence within port spaces to indicate co-existing violence amongst the related communities during this time. We also look to consider the presence of alternative visions and resisting accounts that emerged during this period. This extends an analysis of the atmosphere of the period and includes some co-existing events

which we argue must be read alongside the riots to more fully represent the space-times of port settlements.

The riots emerged during a period of considerable violence in both places. Regular reports of violence associated with demobilised soldiers and sailors are prominent within local newspapers. These include instances of violence from demobilised soldiers towards members of the public and police (*Shields Gazette*, 18th January 1919; *Shields Daily News*, 11th March 1919). On Thursday 9th January 1919, in South Shields, a shop on Waterloo Vale, which was owned by an Arab, was attacked. All of the windows were smashed and significant damage was reported (*Shields Gazette*, 13th January 1919). The following afternoon, the largest Arab seamen's boarding house in South Shields in 1919 was similarly attacked without provocation by a crowd of over 200 civilians, soldiers and demobilised servicemen. Such attacks were prominent elsewhere, with similar scenes of violence found in Cardiff prior to the 1919 riots in the city (Evans, 1980; Jenkinson, 2009). This violence, preceding the riots, has arguably been downplayed in terms of significance in relation to the events, yet the regularity of such scenes speaks to a wider atmosphere of racialised exclusion that was shaped and engendered by trade union organising, but also enacted and felt in everyday spaces. As Hall notes in *Policing the Crisis*, it is the *repetition* of violence, found in different times and places, that speaks to a wider structural, and perhaps atmospheric, racism.

In March 1919, two soldiers were walking in South Shields and two Arabs were behind them when an altercation erupted. Conflicting versions of the altercation emerged, with the defence arguing during the trial that:

[T]hat the story of the Arab was that while walking down Coronation Street they met several soldiers, one of whom, as they passed, struck Hassan on the back of the neck. Turning round, Hassan asked "what's the matter?" whereupon he was kicked to the ground. A knife was produced by one of the soldiers and an effort was made to steal his watch and chain. Hassan then took out his razor. (*Shields Gazette*, 10th March 1919).

Hassan was fined 40 shillings and the case against the soldiers was dismissed due to there being 'an element of doubt' (ibid). In response to the lack of prosecution of the soldiers involved in the incident Mr Muir Smith, whom frequently acted as defence in cases involving the Arab community, argued on behalf of the community that 'the life of these Arab firemen is becoming intolerable' and noted that 'an Arab is now afraid to walk along the street' (ibid). Notably, his commentary speaks to a wider anxiety within street encounters, arguably informed by an atmosphere and presence of racialised violence, which again disrupts understandings of riots as singular and contained violent events and is instead suggestive of a wider atmosphere of racialised hostility.

This hostility did not only emerge through direct acts of violence though, with a broader sense of hostile and uninhabitable conditions in 1919 stressed by black seafarers in Glasgow. Complaints from collective groups articulated the wider issues faced by sailors in the region and begins to give an insight into their related conditions. In their letter to the

Lord Provost of Glasgow, also published by the *Evening Times*, Colonials and Discharged Soldiers made clear that:

[C]oloured men in Glasgow are at present actually starving, and have to walk the streets at night through lack of money to provide lodging accommodation. Some of them have been wounded and discharged from the Army. (*Evening Times*, 17th February 1919)

These claims were supported by the secretary of the Edinburgh Board of Health who wrote about a 'serious problem' to the Colonial Office in May 1919, indicating that there were '100 unemployed coloured men in Glasgow, two-thirds of them are destitute'.⁴ Elsewhere in the letter the representative group explicitly point criticism at union leadership, noting 'countrymen, who are to-day in a most deplorable condition, through no fault of their own, but are victims of Shinwell's machinations'. The coverage of such grievances and the explicit linking to trade union leaders, is also suggestive of the consequences of the exclusionary positions of seafaring trade unionism. The letters and complaints are taken from several months after the January riots. Thus, the longer trajectory of the construction of sailors as racialised labour competition, and more broadly as a 'social problem' (McFarland, 1991: 509), becomes important for contextualising the riots and unpacking the racialised conditions within daily life. Riotous events reflect this in a distinctively violent manner, but the experiences raised here are suggestive of a longer lasting atmosphere that shaped the victimisation and daily lives of non-white seafarers.

These snapshots from South Shields and grievances from Glasgow begin to indicate a wider context of hostility within which the riots took place. These conditions and events were also found within a time of increasing labour organising and this requires acknowledging to further contextualise the events. In Glasgow, the riots preceded a much-celebrated moment in the labour history of the area, commonly known as Red Clydeside, with the forty hours movement taking place in the same month of January. Newspaper reports in Belfast are notable for their suggestion that that due to the leadership of Shinwell and the BSU joining the strike for a shorter working week in 1919, 'the question of Chinese labour, which strong feeling exists at the harbour, has been introduced into the matter' (*Northern Whig*, 29th January, 1919). This linkage between the demands for a shorter working week and the racialised exclusion of workers illustrates how labour demands can mask more exclusionary labour grievances. Importantly it also indicates how racism, and racialised violence, did not function in isolation to other social forces prominent during this period. Instead, they were intimately connected with unions and leadership figures connected to both events.

As 1919 continued, dissatisfactions with social and economic conditions triggered further violence in South Shields. In August 1919 racialised violence was present during a public meeting on 'Communism and Industrialism' (*Shields Daily News*, 18th August 1919). Thousands of people congregated in the Market Place to hear the speakers and at the conclusion of the meeting, the topic of 'coloured seamen' and their white wives was brought up for discussion. Discussion of these matters triggered and enraged the crowd

⁴ TNA, CO 323/843 Letter from The Secretary, The Board of Health, Edinburgh 9th January 1920

who were then reported to have rushed across the Market Place with the purpose of raiding the Continental Café (*Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 22nd August 1919). In court the prosecution 'characterised the scenes in the Market Place, as most disgraceful and reflecting great discredit upon the town' (*Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 19th August 1919). Such connections between political rallies, organising practices and racialised violence are stressed here to challenge the isolation of riots as discrete events and instead to show the wider relevance of the riots, as connected to key organising and political nodes within the places considered. This is significant for thinking through their relevance as usable pasts and for noting, as recognised through engagement with Gilroy above, the coeval nature of a growth in trade unionism and the political left, alongside racist ideologies and practices (Virdee, 2014).

In extending the analysis, the final coexistent acts we wish to raise is the presence of resistance and alternative voices during this time. Newspaper letters make it clear that many people within the North East of England and West of Scotland rejected the racialised rhetoric that was present elsewhere. Women would notably write protest letters to local newspapers to contest the racist mischaracterisations of a community they were active within:

Sir, - I have been the wife of a coloured man for 25 years [...] I think it is very hard and unjust to see how they have been treated [...] As for my husband, he is a mercantile sailor. He has been torpedoed four times. Is this all the respect the British people can show them after their great sacrifice? [...] If people were only a little broader minded they wouldn't speak so harshly. (*Evening Times*, 1st July 1919)

Newspaper letters such as this signed 'Justice to the coloured race' provide an alternative understanding of how places responded to racialisation. The racism associated with the build-up of tensions in these places often linked to an apparent concern for women that had relationships with foreign seafarers (Tabili, 1994a). This racialisation has been linked to a wider crisis of white masculinity and associated with the broader cultural development of exclusionary and violent responses. Here though, what is made clear is that alternative narratives and more inclusionary visions were present within the places considered and that, as is noted below, these resistant voices add contestation to understanding places of racialised hostility.

In South Shields, Dora Sharp was arrested for having caused a disturbance in East Holborn in February 1919. She was reported as 'behaving in a disorderly manner and using threatening language' outside of a boarding house where she worked as a domestic servant (*Shields Gazette*, 8th February 1919). Her defence lawyer said that she had been provoked by another woman making negative remarks about the Arab community and criticising her morals for working in an Arab boarding house. As she was being arrested, she shouted 'I wouldn't leave the Arab house for twenty of you, I'm probably going to marry one of you tomorrow. Happy Days!' (ibid). Three weeks later Dora married Saleh Raga, a Yemeni seaman. Dora was fined 10 shillings by South Shields Police Court for acting out in defence of the Arab community. Dora was just one of many women who, in the interwar period, would publicly defend the community that through marriage they were now part of (Martin, forthcoming).

The experience of Dora Sharp is demonstrative of the complexities of racialisation in ethnically diverse working class communities in the early twentieth century and nuances a binary understanding of race. As Carby (2019) argues, race can be considered through a series of complex practices that assign difference to people under particular historical and spatial conditions. Carby (2019) draws upon the memories of her white mother being ostracised for dancing with her Jamaican father and how, in being proud of her relationship, she must have been aware of how her body was being racialised and 'that her whiteness had a value and she was willing to risk her worth' (Carby, 2019: 71). Such attention to *Imperial Intimacies* resonates with the acts noted here.

The events and actions considered were all connected to the riots themselves and foregrounding them begins to more fully capture a characterisation of 1919. Centenaries often encourage a singular revisiting of an event, moment or individual life, but what we attempt to provide is a further insight into multiple space-times of 1919. The selection of these events is connected to our understanding of the riots and indicates the wider presence of racialised violence and resisting voices during this time. This has been developed through engagements within and beyond the labour movement and with archival material which might not be considered directly connected to the riots themselves (Wemyss, 2006). We continue this approach in our final empirical section which looks beyond the event itself, spatially and temporally.

CUT 3: WITHIN AND BEYOND SPACES OF VIOLENCE – CONNECTIONS AND LEGACIES

In the final cut of this paper, we wish to look beyond the immediate events of interest in South Shields and Glasgow to reveal a longer trajectory and wider spatiality of the riots. We seek to identify how the riots were part of a much longer history of racialisation, and how they shaped and influenced future moments and experiences. This wider characterisation of the space-times of riotous events points to their significance but also illuminates the more enduring presence of racism, which might easily be dismissed with an account stressing the exceptionality of riots. In attending to these longer trajectories, we further highlight resisting voices to indicate how violent conditions were continually contested through more progressive political visions.

It is notable that the possibility of racialised violence remained within port spaces beyond the events considered. Following the riot, the Mill Dam area of South Shields became noted as a space of open hostility and insecurity. Two days after the riot on the Mill Dam, an Indian fireman was arrested and charged with 'having conducted himself in a manner likely to incite persons to cause a breach of peace' (*Shields Gazette*, 7th February 1919). Zanda Shay was walking around the Mill Dam in search of employment and was seen by police to be acting in a nervous manner. The police stopped him and searched him where they found two large stones in his pockets. In the trial at the police court, Shay stated that he had heard of the riot on the Mill Dam a few days earlier and had gone there to seek work, he was carrying the stones as he was afraid of being attacked (ibid). Such incidents give a brief insight into the possible immediate consequence of the riots as the Mill Dam in South Shields developed an association with racialised hostility. Such anxiety was likely felt elsewhere following the violence and is similarly reflected in the letters highlighted earlier.

In particular, those spaces associated with shipping employment, as sites of everyday labour encounters, had taken on a transformed meaning informed by the violence and wider hostility.

As noted above, black and Arab seafarers and communities continued to campaign and illuminate their experiences in the months and years following the riots. Tabili (1994b) notes how sailors originating from colonial countries would also ask 'for British justice' (albeit often unsuccessfully) and campaign upon their grievances and issues from a British standpoint, given their previous service to the colonial government. Numerous letters and petitions were sent by black and Arab seafarers to the Colonial Office describing the miserable conditions in British port towns which were being experienced by British Subjects and Protected Persons. These acts speak to an alternative articulation of Britishness that resisted more dominant and exclusionary formations. Such actions, experiences and protests were an important part of the atmospheres unpacked here, and more broadly speak to what Kelliher (2020: 4) describes as how 'the meaning of violence can become a site of struggle in particular conjunctures'.

From as early as April 1919 the Colonial Office received 'well written representations from coloured seamen [...] complaining of their difficulty in getting a ship owing to the preference of masters for white foreigners of coloured British subjects and also to the attitude of the Seamen's Union'.⁵ Such campaigns, included those of the 'Delegates of Coloured Seamen in Glasgow' who articulated their response to the events of 1919:

We are not willing to surrender our rights for Spaniards, Swedes, Greeks and Chinese since we are all British born subjects and can prove of being in Britain and sailing on British ships long before the war.

We will be loyal and allow ourselves to be deported when the Government of Britain enact a law also that white men who are filling the places of coloured men in Africa and the West Indies are deported to their own native shore.⁶

These petitions reveal resistance and organising practices, whilst also suggesting an awareness of the global networks and flows that informed their experience. The letter also indicates the potentiality for news of events to travel. Tony Martin (1974) has highlighted how sailor disputes were equally prominent in the Caribbean. His work links to the response of the 'delegates of coloured seamen' by illustrating the broader spatiality of grievances amongst workers. He analyses the history of a workers strike in Trinidad in December 1919 and illustrates how violence occurred between black residents and white sailors during a peace demonstration in July that year. He considers how several British sailors from the H.M.S. Dartmouth 'were wantonly and severely assaulted, as were several other European members of the community' and 'very lewd and disparaging remarks were freely made about the white race and about their women folk' (Martin, 1974: 318). Martin specifically

⁵ The National Archives, CO 323/818, Report on the treatment of Coloured British Seamen, 9th April 1919.

⁶ TNA, CO 323/813 Letter from 'delegates of coloured seamen in Glasgow' to Colonial Office, 7th May 1919

links these scenes to the spread of knowledge about the British riots (specifically those in Cardiff) between white and black sailors in 1919.

Alongside petitions, support and solidarity began to develop across local, national and international scales. Organisation emerged during this period, such as the Seamen's Minority Movement, the National African Sailors and Firemen's Union, British and Foreign Sailors Society and the Islamic Society to develop collectives through which British colonial seafarers could organise. In March 1919, Dr Sheldrake, president of the Islamic Society, was interviewed by the *Shields Gazette* following his establishment of a South Shields branch. In the interview, Sheldrake frequently reminds the population of South Shields that the members of the Arab community 'are British subjects and most loyal' and that 'they are not seeking to usurp the British sailors, but they want fair competition, as British subjects' (*Shields Gazette*, 11th March 1919). In Glasgow, similar organisations brought a sustained assistance to sailors of colour with evidence highlighting the presence of a Lascar meeting room space within Glasgow Sailors' Home and a 'Mission to the Lascars' instituted in 1897 (McFarland 1991: 500). Such enduring organisational efforts were only possible due to the informal kinship networks that sustained communities within and beyond 1919. These initiatives and responses must be positioned as part of a wider repertoire of resistant and supportive acts that sustained a presence within and beyond the events of 1919.

Whilst foregrounding such acts of care and support, we conclude our empirical engagements by noting that racialised antagonisms continued throughout the 1920s. Whilst not directly traceable through direct acts of rioting, or necessarily through disputes amongst seafarers, there are numerous examples of continuing and wider racialised tensions within both places. Ongoing racialised responses from trade unions are also notable within seafaring union archives with Wilson and Shinwell continuing to press a racialised right to work position. Here we wish to utilise the wider perspective stressed throughout the paper to suggest that this racism stretched beyond trade union and labour dynamics. Notably, in 1925, Indian peddler Noor Mohamed is murdered in Glasgow following an attack by a white mob on a house, shared with several other Indians:

The police report states that at 10.30 p.m. the door of a two-apartment house at 56 Water Street, Port-Dundas, occupied by an Indian named Sundi Dein, was forced open by a number of men, who swarmed into the house and assaulted the inmates – eight Indian pedlars – one of whom, Norr Mohamed (27), a native of the Punjab, India, was stabbed on the left breast with a dagger or similar weapon and mortally wounded. (*Evening Times*, 18th May 1925)

Court trial papers associated with this violence note the use of racist language by members of a crowd who left a dancing hall and gathered around the crime scene.⁷ Such events have previously not been linked with those of 1919, yet their proximity and similarities remain significant. Whilst not indicative of direct causality, between the economic conditions,

⁷ National Records of Scotland. JC36/49 Trial transcript from the trial of William Dayer, Robert Fletcher, John Keen, John McCormack for the crime of intimidation, murder, assault, theft. Tried at High Court, Glasgow. 31 August 1925.

political responses or linear connections between the specific acts themselves, the wider events are reflective of racialised atmospheres and hostilities. Following the murder, there was a newsworthy response from the Indian community of Glasgow with a large crowd recorded at the funeral of Norr Mohamed, with reports noting 'that the death of Noor Mohamed has caused much feeling among the Indian population' (*Evening Times*, 18th May 1925).

Acknowledging the longer trajectories of such violence troubles the simple association of events with exceptionality. A wider set of experiences points to historical patterns and repetitions which indicates a much wider presence of racism and hostility within the places considered. This approach also reveals the nuances and divergences in how this racism was practiced and acted upon, indicating economic and political articulations associated with the violence. In attending to this plurality, we have also stressed the presence of resistant visions and co-existing, yet related, events. This has implications for thinking through such histories as usable pasts, as distinctive events that were closely connected to wider atmospheres and experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has revisited the South Shields and Glasgow riots, as situated and contextualised events, developing an alternative characterisation of place-based histories. Here we conclude on this approach and reflect on the wider meaning of revisiting riots as usable pasts. The comparative approach reveals continuities and differences in the place-based experiences associated with the year of the 'race riots'. Our account of the events of 1919 as more-than labour disputes, foregrounds a wider sphere of related experiences to illuminate components that have been previously downplayed. For example, the co-existent trajectories of organised trade unionism alongside increased racism amongst workers can be read alongside the daily lives of violent conditions and resistant voices. We suggest that this wider realm of experience reflects some of the circulating influences which made race 'historically active' in British port spaces in 1919 (Hall, 1996).

This approach has stressed the significance of the events themselves but also situated their making as part of wider trajectories and atmospheres of racialised violence. The paper suggests that riots can be viewed as both significant in themselves but also as part of something with a longer lasting trajectory and wider spatial reach. Our account begins to disrupt distinctions between the exceptional and the everyday by drawing upon wide ranging, but connected, evidence. As part of our engagement with racialised atmospheres, we have deliberately foregrounded events and figures that might appear to have no obvious linkage (Wemyss, 2006). Thus, the racism within the riots can be viewed through and alongside a wider array of experiences, including the anxiety of sailors of colour in South Shields, the frustrations of a sailor's wife articulated in letters and those experiences found directly within violent and riotous moments.

Attending to the emotional experiences related to the events is central to our approach towards riots and draws upon geographical works connecting emotional geography and race (Nayak, 2011). The inclusion of these co-existing forces and experiences indicates the

importance of a more variable and nuanced account of 1919. We suggest that place-based histories benefit from moving beyond singular narratives, and towards a spatial and temporal account of events. This positioning is shaped by a commitment more broadly to engage with political atmospheres (Closs Stephens, 2016). We argue the atmospheres found in South Shields and Glasgow in early 1919 informed, and were informed by, everyday experiences during this period. We do not present the experiences as representative of everyday life, but instead suggest that the archive material noted above provides a broader characterisation of daily life, and particularly the multiple articulations of race and nation.

Indeed, the commonalities between the South Shields and Glasgow riots themselves are representative of a wider circulation of atmospheres facilitated by key actors, such as Wilson and Shinwell, and mediums, such as newspapers, platform speeches and street encounters. Our attention to space-time geographies and historically specific racisms complicates simplistic explanations or connotations. The riots were not simply caused by economic conditions, nor simply forged discretely within the associated labour geographies. Our relational and political emphasis, specifically thinking within and beyond events, has attempted to both assert the importance of the riots themselves whilst also attending to variations and nuances. Our use of three distinctive 'cuts' attempts to develop a political geography informed account of riots by attending to a relational understanding of their making.

Revisiting our introductory comments regarding centenaries as usable pasts, we have attempted to show how these potentially sensitive histories do not benefit from singular narratives. Associating particular community histories with violent events is likely to cause unease with contemporary communities as has been stressed by The Yemeni Project (2019) in South Shields. With this in mind, it is the contributions from Subaltern Studies and Black British Cultural Studies that have informed our approach. These efforts to foreground political approaches to understanding the dynamic between racism, violence and the everyday is key to any framing of the 1919 riots as usable pasts. Revisiting the conjunctures associated with these events and unpacking their making does not simply encourage a relational approach, recognising multiplicity and diversity in their representation. Instead, the intention here is to show how the events mattered and reflected a longer trajectory of repetitive exclusion fostering a racialised atmosphere within and beyond the riots.

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