

Acknowledgments

For the Orphans (Not Prisoners) of Geography

This book took a long time to write, which may be fitting for a book about the racial affects of deep-time narrativizing. But the span of ten years has meant that I have not quite found an adequate way to write the acknowledgments, given the volume of talks, engagements, chats, and questions that made other paths grow. I was finishing the final edits on this book when my dad died in 2022. Among the minimal paperwork that was left after his exuberant passage across the world were his papers relating to the British Nationality Act of 1948. Under “Race,” he was coded Arab. He had traveled across the world to London as a young boy with the British Royal Navy, whose white officers had a penchant for watching Malay Thai boxing. My parents never mentioned race, and yet a “mixed” marriage in the 1970s deeply shaped the lives of us all. I was nine before we met my dad’s family, and on that trip, I saw my first mine in Sri Lanka. In the holes in the ground, the informal gem mines, children the same age as my brother and I worked covered in wet clay earth. Experiences have strange undergrounds that surface unexpectedly in the work we do. There are many people who help guide that process with generosity and companionship in the ideas we eventually settle in. It is not straightforward to acknowledge these surfacings.

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