# Twitter Thread by Nicolette D'Angelo



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## On what “burn it all down” really means, where it comes from, and why the predominant reactions to Sarah Bond’s original tweet from academics are willfully ignorant and reactionary. Thread.

Talk of “burning it all down” is not new nor aimed at nihilism. It's a standard phrase in abolitionist scholarship, aimed at dismantling structures that at best treat decolonization as an intellectual debate, and at worst enact state-sanctioned death. https://t.co/iuPmxwMkFx

In academia, I, like Sarah Bond, take “burning it all down” thus to mean addressing that white supremacy, casualization, and sexual violence are not aberrations, but business as usual in academia, such that a radical restructuring is required. https://t.co/DoyDYIz5mH

> You can care about certain scholars, students, material culture, and texts within a field and still want that field to be dismantled and burned so that those elements can be truly saved & white supremacy can be smothered.
>
> — Dr. Sarah Bond (@SarahEBond) January 23, 2021

.@Eidolon (rip) published an editorial on “burning it all down” in 2019. “Bound to infuriate Boomers,” this kind of rhetoric is “a challenge to imagine how, if you had a blank slate, you’d go about solving big problems in creative, radical ways.” https://t.co/PsrVEuUgTi

At AIASCS 2018, @platanoclassics urged against defending the field, calling instead “for this contemporary configuration of Classics to die, so that it might be born into a new life.” Merely waiting out the storm is "not only unethical but unimaginative.” https://t.co/VNfFHKeU7e

He also asks, “What exactly do we propose to do by expanding access? Are we simply in the business of bringing fresh blood to the ghosts?” I have written about this question here: https://t.co/rf2WvU9bFm

As you may have noticed, in both these provocations there is an emphasis on NEW life, on NEW scholarly communities wherein the most historically excluded members of our field get to reconfigure the terms of knowledge production, labor, and

disciplinary identity.

These are some of the most visionary, tireless members of our field, who do the thankless work of proposing serious alternatives. However, they get accused of wanting to make classicists metaphorically “homeless.” https://t.co/2gpIQudYjH

> However noble your intentions, if you burn down your house without the capacity to build a new one, all you\u2019ve done is made yourself homeless. https://t.co/0A2atM3cZS
>
> — Theo Nash (@theo_nash) January 23, 2021

My peers & I have also been accused of desiring destruction merely for voicing basic concerns in graduate fora about pedagogy and syllabi. We offer ideas & alternatives, but they go ignored while the “burn it all down” narrative is foisted on us by even well-meaning professors.

Thus, like abolitionists, we have reclaimed the term of "burning it down" as on some level it’s impossible to escape, and on another level, it conveys the extent of the liberatory change that we desire and others fear.

.@nadhirawho describes how BIPOC classicists are regularly seen as “too harsh or too critical” for critiquing the field, as if these critiques may if aired sow so much discord that we're somehow weaker in the face of rightwing receptions of Classics. https://t.co/l9kyQQGkOH

This is the "you're racist for talking about racism" argument. Nadhira here gestures toward an oft-overlooked fact: that merely the violence is always situated *outside* Classics, and thus critiquing the field has led to people *being accused of* wanting to burn it all down.

Here I find @feministkilljoy's “An Affinity of Hammers” helpful to think with. Ahmed observes that “so much violence directed against [minority] groups works by locating that violence as coming from within those groups." https://t.co/z3jx3leT1q

“Even causing the violence directed against them”: this is where the charge that the alternative of Bond's global antiquity model is akin to homelessness becomes the most morally disgusting.

In pretending that the current system is accessible for the majority of those who might want to teach and learn about the ancient world, several today revealed that they think, on some level, that Classics is better off as is, that at least it *works*.

My only question is, works *for whom*? If the field Classics really is a house, who gets to live there, and who doesn’t? Who always doesn’t? /end