Reading against “Post-Race”: Multiculturalism in Contemporary British Literature

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Abstract

At the turn of the millennium, the shifting racial makeup in Britain created social tensions between its white and nonwhite members. This period coincided with the emergence of a "post-racial" discourse, which contends that social and democratic progress will eventually end these tensions by dissolving racial categories altogether. In the 1990s, this idea gained traction in the Western cultural imagination, and mixed-race people became symbols for a utopian "post-racial" future in Western nations. Although "post-race" discourse is propounded as the solution to growing racial tensions, this multicultural model has given way to more insidious forms of racialized violence. This phenomenon is observable in microaggressions, which are acts or comments that are instances of indirect or unintentional discrimination. It also occurs at an institutional level, where laws and acts facilitate systemic inequality. Through the analysis of three novels, Barry Unsworth's *Sacred Hunger* (1992), Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2007), and Caryl Phillips' *Foreigners* (2007), this thesis explores how contemporary British novels critique a new era of coded racism that claims to be progressive and inclusive. Chapter One focuses on *White Teeth*, a novel that stages the effects of British colonial history on generations of immigrants in the twentieth century. *Foreigners*, the subject of Chapter Two, recovers the forgotten stories of three black British men. Chapter Three analyses *Sacred Hunger*, a historical novel that juxtaposes the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade with ideas of utopia. Critical race studies, historiography, and Marxist literary theory inform the analysis of how novelists respond to and document British colonialism, forced migration, and inequality. The objective for these authors is not to propose a model for the future that competes with the "post-race" model, but to expose it as a form of false consciousness that reinforces racial hierarchies.

Résumé

Au tournant du millénaire, la composition raciale changeante en Grande-Bretagne a créé des tensions sociales entre ses groupes raciales. Cette période a coïncidé avec l'émergence d'un discours «post-racial», qui soutient que le progrès social et démocratique finira par mettre fin à ces tensions en dissolvant complètement les catégories raciales. Dans les années 1990, cette idée est devenu populaire dans l'imaginaire culturel occidental et les gens de race mixte sont devenus les symboles d'un futur utopique. Bien que le discours «post-racial» soit proposé comme la solution aux tensions, ce modèle multiculturel a produit des formes plus insidieuses de violence raciale. Ce phénomène est observable dans les microagressions, qui sont des actes ou des commentaires qui sont des cas de discrimination indirecte ou involontaire. Cela se produit également au niveau institutionnel, où les lois et les actes facilitent les inégalités systémiques. À travers l'analyse de trois romans, *Sacred Hunger* de Barry Unsworth (1992), *White Teeth* de Zadie Smith (2007) et *Foreigners* de Caryl Phillips (2007), cette thèse explore comment les romans britanniques contemporains critiquent une nouvelle ère de racisme codé qui prétend être progressif et inclusif. Le premier chapitre se concentre sur *White Teeth*, un roman qui met en scène les effets de l'histoire sur des générations d'immigrants au XXe siècle. *Foreigners*, le sujet du chapitre deux, retrace les histoires oubliées de trois hommes noirs britanniques. Le troisième chapitre analyse *Sacred Hunger*, un roman historique qui juxtapose les horreurs de la traite transatlantique des esclaves à des idées d'utopie. Les études critiques de la race, l'historiographie et la théorie littéraire marxiste éclairent l'analyse de la manière dont les romanciers réagissent au colonialisme britannique, les migrations forcées et les inégalités. L'objectif pour ces auteurs n'est pas de proposer un modèle d'avenir qui rivalise avec le modèle «post-race», mais de l'exposer comme une forme de fausse conscience qui renforce les hiérarchies raciales.

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Introduction

At the turn of the millennium, the shifting racial makeup in Britain created social tensions between its white and nonwhite members. These tensions are observable in the output of British cultural production at the time. With the acclaim of the preceding generation of postwar writers including Sam Selvon, V.S. Naipaul, Hanif Kureishi, and Salman Rushdie, the 1990s ushered in a generation of novelists who sought to represent new forms of racial hybridity. This project focuses on three literary texts from that era: Barry Unsworth's *Sacred Hunger* (1992), Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), and Caryl Phillips' *Foreigners* (2007). These novels are concerned with both overt and insidious forms of racism that emerge as a result of the changes taking place in Britain. For instance, the presence of racist attitudes in Britain are apparent in "Too Diverse?" by David Goodhart, who argues that ethnic diversity "destabilizes liberal society by weakening the common culture" (Pathak 35). To combat this instability, Goodhart advocates for "the reinvigoration of citizenship" which would promote a "liberal nationalism" (35). Unsworth, Smith, and Phillips express alarm over the politics of critics like Goodhart and others who share his assimilationist ideas. They fear that the rhetoric of liberal nationalism will be associated with social and democratic progress, when it is in fact detrimental to the rights and liberties of nonwhite Britons.

This thesis also interrogates how "multiculturalism" has become a problematic term that perpetuates racist attitudes. The term may signal a harmonious coexistence of different races and cultures, but it can also double as an assimilationist tool. If it is true that "whiteness nowhere features as an explicit condition of being British, but it is widely understood that Englishness, and therefore by extension Britishness, is racially coded," then the term "multicultural" is

misleading because it claims to mobilize racial equality when it actually permits the continuation of white hegemony in Britain (Arikan 1682). Unsworth, Smith, and Phillips critique and parody this post-racial false consciousness by using broad historical scopes that trace the history of racial inequality and by imagining alternatives to the current state of race relations. This project borrows methods from critical race studies, historiography, and Marxist literary theory to investigate the ways in which the novels reject racist attitudes that posture as progressive attitudes.

A 1993 issue of *Time* magazine entitled "The New Face of America: How Immigrants Are Shaping the World's First Multicultural Society," features a computer-generated image of a woman's face on the cover, alongside the statement: "Take a good look at this woman. She was created by a computer from a mix of several races. What you see is a remarkable preview of the new face of America" (*Time*). Though the publication is American, the cover is indicative of a broader reaction to the growing presence of racial and ethnic diversity in the Western cultural imagination. Although the *Time* publication signals a shift in attitudes towards race, the magazine cover captures false consciousness regarding the development of racial equality in the West. Due to an influx of immigration in the latter half of the twentieth century, in addition to a longstanding history of forced migration, the prominence of diverse communities in Western nations has facilitated the emergence of "post-racial" discourse, which contends that social and democratic progress has quashed the existence of racial categories, and by extension, has ended racial inequality. It also contends that race itself is only a social construct and therefore should not have influence on a society.

Post-race rhetoric made a move from popular discourse and into the academic community at the turn of the millennium and continues into the twenty-first century; this rhetoric creates a

clear distinction between those in the community who support post-race theory and those who oppose it. Citing that affirmative action disproportionately benefits upper class members of black communities, William Julius Wilson, author of *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978), argues that class has become more important than race (Wilson). Wilson's argument takes an intersectional approach to inequality instead of solely focusing on race. However, his suggestion that race alone is no longer an accurate indication of privilege, or lack thereof, fails to account for the many ways that race continues to be a central factor in how people of colour are identified, policed, and oppressed.

Another post-race scholar, Kwame Anthony Appiah, is committed to attacking pseudo-scientific claims of racial difference. In doing so, though, he denies the existence of racial categories altogether. Conversely, scholars such as Homi Bhabha, W.J.T. Mitchell, Michelle Elam, Amy Ansell, Stuart Hall, and Paul Gilroy reject post-race theory. They fear its potential as false consciousness because, by definition, post-race theory precludes racial essentialism. Racism theoretically requires more than one racial group, and post-race theory is problematic for the very reason that it eliminates all racial groups. Because it presents itself as the solution to a problem, if it is legitimized as a theory, it may become easier to overlook and ignore the persistence of racial inequality. In response to post-race theory, these scholars have developed theories of hybridity that allow them to consider the relationship between social cohesion and individuality. Hybridity theorists share a willingness to participate in a struggle against white hegemony in Western countries in a way that accounts for, and is enriched by, ethnic and racial difference.

Recent scholarship on race in the United Kingdom has analysed the progress of race criticism in daily life, in art, and in academia. Paul Warmington examines how critical race

theory itself has been devalued by academics "who have been unsettled by its race-conscious social analysis" (Warmington). He acknowledges that this opposition to critical race theory has "an unfortunate resonance at a time when young activists are pressing for the decolonization of higher education" (Warmington). Maleiha Malik illustrates how a similar opposition to racial integration is found at the state level. She explains that "traditional liberal definitions of the nation-state and political community have adopted a reductionist and uncritical assumption that there is only one way (rather than many) to organize private and social life" (Malik 17). The nation-state has historically adopted a "hard multiculturalism" as opposed to a "progressive multiculturalism," which is "based on a belief in the incommensurability of values rather than scepticism about the possibility of human values" (17). Malik looks to the possibility of liberal pluralism, which goes further than traditional strategies of toleration and non-discrimination. Instead, it aims to accommodate minorities in the public sphere. The bombings of 7 July 2005 mark a shift in the discourse of race relations in Britain, with many Britons, conservative and liberal, claiming that British multiculturalism is a failed model. A British think-tank Policy Exchange entitled *Living Apart Together* claimed that multiculturalism has contributed to the radicalization of Muslim youth living in Britain. Malik explains how the government has been unwilling to debate Policy Exchange publicly which, she concludes, resulted in the exaggeration of the possible role of "cultural and religious difference" as a cause for the 2005 bombings. Government backed initiatives such as *Living Apart Together* passively promote segregation, marginalization and, in some cases, violence against minorities. Malik notes that

> The most recent and comprehensive empirical study confirms that Muslims are the social group at the greatest risk of prejudice, discrimination and hatred. This suggests that British Muslims are likely to be constructed as a 'suspect community' through similar

> social processes and in ways that are reminiscent of the treatment of Irish Catholics when there was a risk of political violence by the IRA (Malik 57).

Although the corpus of novels under consideration in this thesis were written before or during the immediate aftermath of the 2005 bombing, they are eerily predictive of the current state of race relations in Britain. The novels at once identify historical trends of inequality and forecast what is to come in the future of Britain.

This thesis combines critical race theory with Marxist cultural theory to articulate how historical transformations occur and how they are represented in literature. According to Paul Gilroy, the emergence of cultural nationalism presents "immutable, ethnic differences as an absolute break in the histories and experiences of 'black' and 'white' people" (2557). In the same way that ethnic absolutism would view miscegenation as "a litany of impurity and pollution," the organization of culture in the West cannot accommodate cultural hybridity (2557). In 1968, Enoch Powell, Conservative Member of Parliament, expressed this sentiment in his infamous "Rivers of Blood speech," in which he denounces the rise of immigration and ethnic diversity in Britain as a "national danger": "We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependents" (215). According to Gilroy, these essentialist politics persisted throughout the twentieth century and fuelled the discursive construction of an exclusionary "we" in the national consciousness, which became associated with a language of national belonging. Nadine Attewell contextualizes Powell's speech within a growing fear of apocalypse in the postwar era. She writes that Powell sees the speed of a once majority white neighbourhood becoming majority black as "the contagiousness of blackness, blacks' capacity to spread like an overcasting cloud through a district—or nation—when once they gain a toehold" (Attewell 180). Powell's speech was a reaction to the Race Relations act, which made it illegal to

refuse housing, employment, or public services to a person on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origins. Instituted in light of the 1950s race riots, this disagreement between Powell's political wing and the wing that passes the acts reveals a history of division on the topic of race relations in Britain. *Sacred Hunger*, *Foreigners,* and *White Teeth* work in tandem to analyse how these political forces continue to shape the experience of racialized peoples in the UK.

The thesis will also include debates within critical race theory and diaspora studies to analyze how these competing ideologies are at play in the novels. At the forefront of the tension between hybridity and post-race theory is W.J.T. Mitchell's interrogation of Kwame Anthony Appiah's stance on the significance of race. Mitchell cites what he calls a "warning to post racial theorists today" from W.E.B. Du Bois: "we are apt to think in our American impatience, that while it may have been true in the past that closed race groups made history, that ... we have changed all that, and have no need of this ancient instrument of progress" (Du Bois quoted in Mitchell 42). Du Bois' words point to the crux of a debate in critical race theory: race is indeed a social construct, yet it also has material consequences that contribute to inequality. The danger of imagining a racial harmony prematurely is that it undermines the continued struggle of people of colour. This thesis agrees with Mitchell's approach in that it interrogates how the three novels grapple with the paradoxical nature of race as both construct and a reality that leads to the discrimination of racialized peoples.

The history of race relations in Britain is a central focus in each of the novels. The mixed-race enclave set in the eighteenth century in *Sacred Hunger*, the historical accounts of black Britons across centuries in *Foreigners,* and the saga of two racially "hybrid" families spanning the entire twentieth century are examples of the authors' intention to show how historical insight captures social developments. Raymond Williams' model of emergent, dominant, and residual

forms is an effective way of thinking about how historical progress actually occurs. Social development is almost never a uniform progress and often features overlapping ideas and modes of living. As Williams contends, "The complexity of a culture is to be found not only in its variable processes and their social definitions—traditions, institutions, and formations—but also in the dynamic interrelations, at every point in the process, of historically varied and variable elements" (Williams 121). Although Williams' concern was "feudal culture or bourgeois culture or a transition from one to the other," his model maps seamlessly onto the transition from racial essentialism to racial hybridity. This also frames "post-race" as a fallible future because it ignores this historical process of change and development (Williams 121).

Georg Lukács argues that the historical novel of the early nineteenth century emerged from a heightened awareness of the significance of their present moment, which prompted writers such as Sir Walter Scott to situate his own time in the broader historical context of Britain. Lukács argues that the novel traces the development of current social conditions. He remarks that the historical novel, as written by such novelists as Scott and Leo Tolstoy, is often used to recount a national history, or to explain how the nation came to be as it is at a given time. He argues that to appeal to a national history is directly correlated to "memories of the past, of past greatness of moments of national dishonor, whether this results in a progressive or reactionary" (Lukács 25). The novels cannot be described as nationalist, but instead they aim to tell the story of Britain's "national dishonours," principally against people of colour, and how this continues to inform current national politics. While Lukács is concerned with the representation of the end of feudalism and the emergence of the bourgeois class, the popularity of the historical novel in the era of racial and ethnic changes in Britain also necessitates representations of the historical conditions that produced these current conditions. The recent

historical novel continues to tell a national history, which has become intrinsically tied to race and ethnicity. The historical novels of Unsworth, Smith, and Phillips trace how colonialism, war, and forced migration are all factors that have brought upon social change in the racial and ethnic makeup of Britain. By exposing the sources of the ongoing state of racial equality in Britain, this historical scope facilitates criticism of post-race in each novel.

The three chapters of this thesis each focus on one novel. With attention accorded to historical events, Western philosophy and art, and intimate relationships, all three novels represent systemic and institutional racism in Britain. For instance, in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, nonwhite characters are burdened by internalized angst and post-colonial trauma. Due to these compounded experiences, characters confront confusion, self-loathing, and identity crises while living in Britain. Smith ruminates on the complexity and persistence of cultural assimilation and how this condition affects immigrants. In her claim that "there is no one more English than the Indian, no one more Indian than the English," she suggests that the pressure to "act English" is more poignantly felt by racial minorities than by white Britons (Smith 327). *White Teeth* cites both space and time as ways that genealogy perpetuates racial hierarchies. The novel also considers competing ideas related to multiculturalism: oneness, which implies the convergence of ethnicities into one "unified" nation, and multiplicity, which privileges cultural individuality. Ultimately, the novel eschews the concept of oneness due to its tendency to efface particularities, and instead turns towards ideas of hybridity that can accommodate both difference and unity.

The second chapter focuses on Caryl Phillips' *Foreigners*, which documents the neglected legacy of black Britons, a history that resists the perceived ethnic and cultural absolutes in Britain outlined by Gilroy. As in *White Teeth*, the stories of the real people who become characters in *Foreigners* show that black Britons are indeed not "foreigners" and have

just as much a claim to "Britishness" as "native" groups. The novel unpacks the compoundedness of being at once black and British, and delves into the divisions within blackness, as the characters have origins in both Africa and the Caribbean. It also explore the systemic forms of racism that bar black Britons from feeling anything but "foreign." Phillips' novel, like Unsworth's and Smith's, imagines possibilities beyond the current state of inequality and to investigate potential alternatives to post-racial theory.

Lastly, Barry Unsworth's *Sacred Hunger,* a mutiny on board a slave ship gives birth to a mixed-race colony composed of British seamen and black Africans being transported to the United States. Set in the eighteenth century, the utopian enclave appears to be an emergent, post-racial, form of society. Unsworth quickly turns this appearance on its head by representing the various complications and power struggles that arise in the society. The chapter employs Williams' concept of emergent forms, as Peggy A. Knapp writes about the mixed-race enclave in *Sacred Hunger* as "preemergent" (323). She explains that the "progressive vision of an interracial, egalitarian community" in the novel "comes too soon" for what would have been deemed acceptable in the eighteenth century (Knapp 323). The idea of emergent forms of utopia in *Sacred Hunger* calls into question if, due to the continued existence of racial inequality, it is still "too soon" to consider any society to truly be "post-racial."

"The Century of Strangers": Mapping the Cultural Effects of Immigration in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

Of the three novels covered in the thesis, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* is the only set entirely in the twentieth century, which Smith calls "the century of strangers" (326). The ubiquity of racial inequality in Britain makes it difficult to tease out the many ways racism pervades everyday life. While post-race rhetoric only produces the illusion of racial equality, the persistence of xenophobia and racism is confirmed by the lived experience of immigrants and people of colour in Britain. In contradistinction to the concept of post-race, *White Teeth* represents how perceiving the end of racism may obfuscate and deepen racial inequality. *White Teeth* represents the state of racial inequality in four different steps. The first step explores the role of time and space (through historicity and genealogy, and how spaces in the novel perpetuate histories of inequality) in exposing the deep roots of racism in Britain. Post-race theory requires an ahistorical approach, and the representation of history exposes post-racial harmony as an impossible ideal. Second, Smith documents the disparity between theories of race relations and the lived experiences of immigrants of colour in the novel. Third, she interrogates how hybridity, the careful negotiation between universalism and particularism, might improve the status of racial justice in Britain. Lastly, Smith looks to emergent examples of racial coexistence that forecast possible alternatives to "post-race." Taken together, these stages illustrate the complex ways that race continues to operate in British life. The novel does not arrive at any solution to racial inequality; instead, it accurately represents the racial and cultural state of Britain at the turn of the millennium.

White Teeth is ambitious in its scale. It brings together characters of different ages, races, genders, in addition to relatives from different time periods and geographical locations, into a

single disjointed plot. The novel focuses primarily on the lives of two families, the Joneses and the Iqbals. English Archie Jones and Bangladeshi Samad Iqbal meet at the end of World War II as part of a tank crew. The two men reconnect thirty years later when Samad moves to Willisden, London, and finds Archie. Archie is recently married to Clara Bowden, a Jamaican woman twenty-eight years his junior whose mother, Hortense, is a devout Jehovah's witness. The couple has one daughter, Irie. Along with Samad's wife, Alsana, and their twin boys, Magid and Millat, there are also the Chalfens, a family of intellectuals who typify middle-class liberal whiteness. These characters become intertwined in ridiculous scenarios that parody the state of Britain's relationships with ex-British Commonwealth countries in the late twentieth century. While Smith is critical of these deeply embedded issues, she also attempts to imagine alternative ways of life through concepts of hybridity. For instance, although the narrative is initially focalized in Archie, there is no single protagonist in the novel. Instead, Smith chooses to represent the multiplicity of experience by giving many characters equal attention. Her ideas echo the work of theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Aimé Césaire, who call for a social universality that celebrates the particular. Thus, *White Teeth* opposes post-race theory, which erases the particularity of individual experience.

History, Space, Genealogy

Like *Sacred Hunger* and *Foreigners*, *White Teeth* is also concerned with the relationship between the passage of time and interracial encounters. The novel begins with the marker of time: "Early in the morning, late in the century, Cricklewood Broadway. At 06.27 hours on 1 January 1975…" (Smith 3). This introduction signals the close attention paid to historicity

throughout the novel. The narrative leaps as far back as 1857 and as far forward as the 1990s. As a result, the novel records changes in race relations in England throughout the twentieth century. It also documents the cyclical and sometimes contradictory relationships between generations of racially and culturally hybrid families. According to John Mullan, the novel incorporates "two different kinds of historical time," what he calls the "recent history" of the 1970s, and "far-away history," such as "events in the Balkans in 1945, in the West Indies in 1907, in India in 1857. All these summon up the consequences of grand historical events: war, earthquake and mutiny, distantly, perhaps invisibly, shaping the lives of Smith's characters" (Mullan). The combination of these two historical scales allows Smith to represent the relation between recent history, which informs the contemporary moment in overt ways, and long history, the repercussions of which manifest in insidious ways. By adopting this strategy, Smith is able to trace the complicated networks of genealogy that have led to British hybridization in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The novel indicates its preoccupation with history by nesting the personal lives of its characters within different historical contexts. For instance, Irie's decision to buy a wig of Indian hair and Millat's obsession with Bruce Springsteen are examples of how eurocentric beauty standards and popular culture insidiously reinforce racial hierarchies. *White Teeth* uses these quotidian examples to document how conditions of inequality are often masked and disassociated from what is conventionally understood as racism. In this way, the novel is a study of how history and genealogy transform societies over time. Michel Foucault makes a similar argument about history:

> The purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of

> emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return; it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us. (qtd. in Nair 1)

Foucault articulates an idea of history that appears in Smith's novel: that the true nature of a society can be understood by observing the ongoing development of its history. The title of the novel implies an emphasis on the growth of the tooth rather than on the root. In other words, the novel uses history and genealogy to trace the development of historical processes such as colonialism and how they continue to affect diasporic cultures in Britain.

Throughout the novel, genealogy marks the passage of time. Smith shows that genetic inheritance leads not to progress but to repetition and stagnation for the Jones, Bowden, and Iqbal families. One instance of this occurs as Irie leaves her home to stay with her grandmother, Hortense, after going six years without seeing her. When she arrives, Hortense remarks: "Bwoy, sometime it like lookin' in a mirror-glass, […] You built like me, big, you know! […] My mudder was de same way. You even named after my mudder" (Smith 385). Not only does her name and appearance connect Irie with her ancestry, but the subheading of this section of the novel, "Irie, 1990, 1907," yokes Irie's experience in 1990 to her great-grandmother's experience at the turn of the century. Ambrosia Bowden, Irie's great-grandmother, was impregnated by a British captain, Charlie Durham, in a sequence of events that affects the Bowden family for generations. The captain abandons Ambrosia during the Kingston earthquake, leaving her to give birth in a church where she is helped by Jehovah's witnesses. This event has consequences on future generations, as Hortense and Ambrosia in particular become very religious. Irie continues to live out the consequences of her family's past, which the British captain caused. This is true of Samad Iqbal as well. The subheading to the section of the novel focalized in him, "Samad 1984, 1857," joins him to the man he alleges is his great-grandfather, Mangal Pande, who played a key

part in the Indian Rebellion of 1857. His relationship to Pande strongly informs his identity both as a war veteran and as a Bangladeshi. This identification proves to have its own consequences: national and cultural attachments cause him to send Magid to Bangladesh. Samad's unintentional prophecy—"Our children will be born of our actions. Our accidents will become their destinies"—positions the novel as a historical materialist document that records how characters inherit the issues of past generations (Smith 102). In this passage, Smith contends that genealogical and national inheritance ensures the continuation of damaging habits and characteristics for the Iqbals and the Bowdens (Irie, Clara, Hortense), as well as for Britain as a whole. By tracing the genealogies of its characters, the novel represents the continuation of racial inequality, contrary to the arguments of post-race theory. Even the new generation appears unable to break out of this cycle perpetuated by a history of colonial violence, xenophobia, and racism in Britain. The inability for the two families to escape their pasts suggests that the continued effects of British colonialism precludes the society from achieving "post-racial" status.

The history of race relations in Britain can also be traced through space, particularly in buildings. The novel interrogates how spaces can either uphold racial inequality or be repurposed to create an environment that better accommodates a racially plural society. Historical connections through space become a motif in the novel, especially for the Iqbal twins and Irie. The secondary school that Millat and Irie attend, Glenard Oak, was formerly a cigarette packaging workhouse. The namesake of the school, Sir Edmund Flecker Glenard, made his fortune in Jamaica farming tobacco. Glenard had an idea of sending hundreds of Jamaican workers to work alongside English workers at the workhouse. The logic to his plan was that he admired the exuberant faith of Jamaican Christians but was "despairing of [their] work ethic and education" (304). He believed that collaboration with the British workers, who worked hard but

were losing their faith, would be mutually beneficial (Smith 304). Although the Jamaicans were initially excited about the opportunity to work in England, Glenard quickly forgot about his experiment and neglected the factory. After Glenard was killed in the 1907 Kingston earthquake, the majority of the Jamaican workers were left unemployed in England. The narrator provides this historical anecdote as Millat and Irie are being punished for smoking marijuana on school premises. Glenard Oak's Headmaster decides that their punishment will be to spend mandatory time with the Chalfens, so that they will not damage their potential, "whether that's [due to] family environment or personal hassles" (304). The Headmaster's decision is a repetition of Glenard's social "experiment" with the Jamaican workers. The repetition may not be apparent to Millat, Irie, or even the Headmaster, because the history of the space has been obscured by the school's records. Smith uses this dramatic irony to demonstrate to the reader how racial inequality is perpetuated at an institutional level. Although the Jamaican workers were exploited at Glenard's workhouse, the high school archives remember its history as a "shelter, workplace and educational institute" for racially diverse workers. The school PTA misidentifies it to create a false legacy that emphasizes interracial cohabitation over racial inequality. Despite the appearance of improved conditions for people of colour, the high school maintains conditions parallel to that of the workhouse as a sign of the persistence of racial inequality in Britain.

Yet Smith shows that buildings can also be repurposed to create racially hybridized spaces. For instance, O'Connell's, the Irish pub that Samad and Archie frequent, was already a reputable business when it was purchased by an Arab immigrant from its original owners. The new owners decide to keep the name so that the hybrid business will be "kindly looked upon" (246). This information is made available during a serial chronology of the pub that Samad and Archie create, a chronology that documents the repurposing of the space over time. Over the

years, the pub becomes a kitschy shared space in which men of different racial and cultural backgrounds can peacefully coexist. The fittings of the pub are painted orange and green to honour the Irish heritage of the establishment, while the owner's brothers "encouraged him to hang fragments of the Qu'ran on the wall" (246). Over time, patrons and owner alike modify the menu and gambling rules for religious reasons, making it a non-hierarchical communal space. Samad also wishes to hang a portrait of Mangal Pande, which contributes to the recreation of the space by its occupants. The pub is therefore an example of a functional racially mixed arena where the infrastructure itself is founded on racial and cultural hybridity.

Theory versus Practice

White Teeth exhibits a preoccupation with representing the real conditions of interracial and intercultural encounters in twentieth-century Britain. These representations stand in contrast to Kwame Anthony Appiah's claim that "there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask 'race' to do for us" (5). While scholars have been critical of his work, Appiah's argument does not dispute the existence of racism. On the contrary, Appiah has demonstrated in much of his work that identity categories are constantly in flux. In his recent work, he outlines limits of race through his own experience as a mixed-race individual. He writes that in each country he visits, people assume he is of a different ethnicity. Appiah tells them he is born in London, but understands that "that's not what they really want to know. What they mean to ask is where my family came from *originally*. Or, more bluntly: what are you?" (Appiah 7). This anecdote is used to suggest that racial identity is both contextual and unfixed, which demonstrates that it is a social construct. Nevertheless, while it may be possible for race to matter

less at some future time, his argument remains strictly theoretical as it cannot account for the racialized violence that has persisted in twentieth and twenty-first-century Britain. Instead of representing British society as a theoretical "melting pot," Smith writes about the unconventional, unidealized instances of contact between racially, culturally, and spiritually different identities.

The tension between theory and practice is outlined in the novel by a discussion between Alsana Iqbal and Neena, her pseudo-intellectual niece. In addition to being critical of Alsana's arranged marriage to Samad, Neena says that she would "seriously consider getting an abortion" if she knew she was pregnant with a boy (Smith 79). Infuriated by her niece's words, Alsana counters: "I cannot be […] worrying all the time about the *truth*. I have to worry about the truth that can be *lived with*" (80). Alsana's response articulates the difficulties that come with applying a theoretical truth to a lived reality. Although the discussion between Alsana and Neena is specifically related to gender relations, the conversation sums up the fundamental difference between practice and theory; Neena's comments of the patriarchy, like post-race theory, do not address the ongoing material struggle of people being subjected to systems of power, whether through gender, class, or race. *White Teeth* attempts to capture the reality of a society in transition, a crucial period that post-race theory cannot account for. *White Teeth* demonstrates that identity is formed by sweeping historical factors, yet it is also shaped by personal experiences. By showing that identity development is highly particularized, Smith affirms that the actual conditions in British society are incompatible with the essentialism of post-race.

The novel identifies a struggle between individuality and social cohesion, and how this struggle might come to bear on the state of racial inequality. Smith uses Zeno's dichotomy

paradox[1] to expose eurocentric biases in science and philosophy, which she connects to race relations in Britain. Classical philosophy is the foundation for Western thought, which has historically "othered" non-Western ways of knowing, and therefore others the people who subscribe to those ways of knowing. Zeno's paradox has been used to explain the value of infinity, but has also been used in discussions of multiplicity and oneness, since it demonstrates that a whole can be divided infinitely. The narrator problematizes this in relation to the twins:

> But what was … [Zeno's] angle? There is a body of opinion that argues his paradoxes are part of a more general spiritual programme. To
>
> (a) first establish multiplicity, the Many, as an illusion, and
>
> (b) thus prove reality a seamless, flowing whole. A single, indivisible One.
>
> Because if you can divide reality inexhaustibly into parts, as the brothers did that day in that room, the result is an insupportable paradox. You are always still, you move nowhere, there is no progress. (Smith 466)

The narrator makes the case that Zeno wanted to prove an objective reality, instead of acknowledging the importance of individual experience within a society. In this sense, Zeno's paradox resembles the theoretical "view from above, from nowhere" that Donna Haraway warns about in her essay *Situated Knowledges* (589). Haraway argues that "scientific and technological, late-industrial, militarized, racist, and male-dominant societies" attempt to enforce a single worldview that marginalizes the experiences of Others in the society (581). It also reveals the inherent biases in Western ideologies, as any claim to objectivity necessarily excludes minority experiences.

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[1] The paradox is expressed as a parable. Achilles must travel a given distance before he reaches a tortoise. Once Achilles has travelled half the distance to the tortoise (1/2), he then must then travel half of *that* remaining distance (1/4). He then must travel half of *that* remaining distance (1/8), and so on. Since this sequence goes on forever, Zeno argues that the distance cannot be travelled and Zeno will never reach the tortoise.

Smith investigates the tensions between theory and practice through social "experimentation" in the novel. The narrator asserts, "This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment" (326). These "experiments" deconstruct the notion that immigrants "step into their foreign lands as *blank people*, free of any kind of baggage, happy and willing to leave their difference at the docks and take their chances in this new place, merging with the oneness of this greenandpleasantlibertarianlandofthefree" (465). Smith uses Magid and Millat as crucial examples for how this stereotype deindividualizes immigrants or any other individual who feels their identity complicated by "living in two places at once" (219). The plotline that follows the Iqbal family features a kind of experimentation that diverges from the conventional "immigrant experience." Feeling like English society is corrupting his family, Samad Iqbal sends his son, Magid, to Bangladesh in the hope that he will receive a proper Muslim upbringing. Samad justifies his decision by arguing that life in England is "too safe": "They live in big plastic bubbles of their own creation, their lives all mapped out for them [...] How can our boys become men when they are never challenged like men? […] No doubt about it, on reflection, sending Magid back was the best thing" (Smith 219). He could only send one of his sons, so Magid's twin brother Millat stays with his family in London. When Magid finally returns to his family years later, it is he who has become more westernized; eurocentrism, it turns out, appears to be more tangible in Bangladesh than in England. Meanwhile, Millat becomes a rebellious teenager who experiences a degree of popularity at his secondary school, yet "underneath it all, there remained an ever present anger and hurt, the feeling of belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere" (269). Eventually, Millat's inner turmoil and disillusionment result in his joining a radical Islamic group, KEVIN, in London. To their father's dismay, both children become "corrupted" in different ways. The twins exemplify how historical factors have a deep

influence on the lives of immigrants in the twentieth century. As immigrants, they are not "blank people."

The twins represent this aforementioned "baggage" as they respectively mature into seemingly contradictory versions of each other. Smith uses this plotline to show that the "original sin" of colonialism continues to dictate the future of all generations. She writes that the twins "in some way seem to make no progress. The cynical might say they don't even move at all, that Magid and Millat are two of Zeno's […] arrows, occupying a space equal to themselves and, what is scarier, equal to Mangal Pande's, equal to Samad Iqbal's" (465). The comparisons between generations of the Iqbal family suggest that many of the issues produced during colonial times continue to affect their lives. The cynicism in the narrator's tone in this passage suggests a frustration with the insidious ways that this colonial legacy appears to be erased, particularly through the imagination of immigrants as *blank people*. The narrator collapses the notion of temporality with regards to the genealogy of the twins: "Two brothers trapped in the temporal instant. Two brothers who pervert all attempts to put dates to this story, to track these guys, to offer times and days, because there isn't, wasn't and never will be any duration. In fact, nothing moves" (465). Despite the central role of history in the novel, Smith suggests in this passage that generational progress is being inhibited by the family's past. There is a direct correlation between the persistence of their struggle and the continued hegemony of white Britons, which shows that the society they live in cannot be called "post-racial."

Conceptualizing Hybridity

White Teeth represents complex social networks that are founded on power imbalances such as white supremacy. Smith makes sure not to oversimplify these unequal relationships between races and cultures by representing the many illogical and incomplete relationships that arise from this social landscape. Supriya Nair argues that the novel attempts to compare two different diasporic cultures, Bangladeshi-British and Jamaican-British, which are represented respectively in the novel by the Iqbal family and the Jones family. Nair argues against the notion that each ethnic group should be the sole writers of their respective histories. She cites Guyanese novelist David Dabydeen, who calls the idea of exclusive self-representation: "outrageous, because [it] reveals a kind of self-apartheid" (1). In other words, although self-representation is closely related to self-determination, authors like Nair and Dabydeen acknowledge that more than ever in "multicultural" societies, race and culture should be represented as relational instead of segregational. Nair argues that Smith "presents a provocative but not absolute challenge to the corralled historical narrative and segregated culture that Dabydeen critiques" (1). Although there has been a movement towards a fusion of cultures, such as the merging of Afro-Indo Caribbean culture in Dabydeen's native Guyana, Nair maintains that this fluidity is not absolute. While it is true that racial identities are fluid and have become less segregated in racially plural societies, this does not erase the existence of racial difference and inequality. In this instance, Smith represents racially and politically hybrid relationships in the novel.

Smith indicates that the concept of hybridity can be embodied in a person's identity. In fact, the examples in the novel show that hybridity can strengthen an individual's sense of self. In relation to Zeno's paradox, the narrator claims that "The harder Achilles tries to catch the

tortoise, the more eloquently the tortoise expresses its advantage. Likewise, the brothers will race towards the future only to find they more and more eloquently express their past, that place where they have just been" (Smith 465). In this regard, cultural hybridity can be viewed positively, not because it signals the end of race as a social category, but because it provides an individual with a stronger sense of self-understanding. Homi Bhabha explains that "counter-narratives of the nation continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries—both actual and conceptual—disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (Bhabha 212). In order to combat the plurality of the nation, which is to say the diverse cultures and experiences that exist in Western nations, Bhabha argues that the nation turns to traditionalism: "difference of space returns as the Sameness of time, turning Territory into Tradition, turning the People into One" (212). To subvert this traditionalism, he claims that employing Freud's concept of "narcissism of minor differences"[2] can penetrate the "boundary that secures the cohesive limits of the Western nation" (212). Bhabha asserts that this would create a "place from which to speak both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal and the emergent," a nod to Raymond Williams' dominant, emergent, and residual categories (213). Smith echoes Bhabha's claims by noting that the twins' compounded identities allow them to better understand the world around them. Due to their experiences, they are able to see beyond the assimilationist Oneness that is prescribed by English culture. Magid and Millat thus typify the "cultural hybridity" discussed by Bhabha. He explains that "This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Babha 5). Whereas post-race proposes to eliminate

[2] Freud's concept of "narcissism of minor difference" contends that communities with close relationships are more likely to engage in conflict due to a hypersensitivity to details of differentiation (*Civilization and its Discontents*, 305).

social hierarchies by erasing difference, hybridity dehierachizes in a way that is centred around difference. Another instance of hybridity occurs while Alsana shares her food with Clara. Although Alsana is initially reluctant to befriend her during their respective pregnancies, "They [had] resigned themselves to their husbands' mutual appreciation society and the free time this leaves is not altogether unpleasant; there is time for picnics and outings, for discussion and personal study; for old French movies …" (Smith 74). Despite their racial and cultural differences, the women cultivate a friendship without having to relinquish the particularity of their identities.

White Teeth thus outlines the advantages of living between races and cultures. The liminal subject position provides individuals with experience and knowledge that may be difficult to access in a homogeneous, post-racial society. The narrator affirms that

> multiplicity is no illusion. Nor is the speed with which those-in-the-simmering-melting-pot are dashing towards it. Paradoxes aside, they are running, just as Achilles was running. And they will lap those who are in denial just as surely as Achilles would have made that tortoise eat his dust. Yeah, Zeno had an angle. He wanted the One, but the world is Many. (Smith 466)

The "Oneness" outlined in this passage encourages a "melting pot" future for Western countries that would inevitably assimilate immigrant cultures and enforce a singular, post-racial culture for all. The narrator's sense of urgency aligns Smith's view with the political call to action in Aimé Césaire's *Letter to Maurice Thorez*, in which he asserts that "there are two ways to lose oneself: walled segregation in the particular or dilution in the universal. My conception of the universal is that of a universal enriched by all that is particular, a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars" (Césaire 151). Césaire's conception of the universal

echoes a central struggle in *White Teeth*—aspiring to achieve social cohesion in a highly diverse and particularized society. Césaire meditated on these politics through the Négritude movement that he spearheaded alongside Leopold Senghor. Doris L. Garraway contends that, for Césaire, "Négritude is not a fixed object but a process through which Césaire comes to problematize both black essentialism and the very idea of racial particularism itself" (Garraway 75). Smith does similar work in *White Teeth*, which can be read as a process of resisting the racial essentialism that is embedded in British society. It is necessary, for both Smith and Césaire, to create a sense of social and cultural unity while also leaving room for difference between races and cultures. Césaire's aspiration to adopt a politics that encourages cohesion through a celebration of diversity is commendable, but in practice it is difficult to attain.

Though these moments of social cohesion do not lead to the same idealized racial harmony promised by post-racial thought, they are sustained through textual representation in both Smith's and Césaire's literary works. Garraway observes in Césaire's poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* that, "As the voice of narration shifts from the distancing, objectifying subject 'I' to the collective 'we,' and then to the singular transcendental 'I', which unifies the collectivity into a single agency, the poet finally accepts the universe of black abjection as his own" (Garraway 72). Césaire's poetics thus reflect his political ideal, in which all black people feel a sense of responsibility to one another because of their shared experience. Despite his efforts, the Négritude movement has been criticized for its essentialism: "To leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essences like negritude . . . is to abandon history for essentializations that have the power to turn human beings against each other" (Said 228-29). Garraway, however, posits that while Césaire was a proponent of the movement, his goal was not to encourage essentialist and exclusionary practices. Rather, he wanted to create a kind of

pluralistic solidarity similar to the one he called for in his *Letter to Maurice Thorez*: "The point, for Césaire, is not to opt for a constructivist model that evacuates both race and subjectivity, but rather to move toward the universal 'human' for which particularism is both a negation and a fundamental condition of possibility" (Garraway). Although Négritude advocates for a social cohesion along racial lines that risks devolving into essentialism, it nevertheless provides a template for imagining societies that unify while allowing room for difference, which is what Smith promotes in her novel.

Emergent Futures

Throughout the novel, there are examples of "a universal enriched by all particulars," but they occur in specific instances, not at the generalizable scale of post-race theory. The patrons at O'Connell's share a space peacefully across races and religions. Instead of becoming a homogeneous British melting pot, the community is a hodgepodge of different races and cultures, which emphasizes and regularizes difference at the same time. This hybridity is embodied in the owners of O'Connell's, who adopt "split" names such as Abdul-Colin and Abdul-Mickey. Since all of the brothers were named Abdul, they each select an English name, which emphasizes their ethnic and cultural hybridity as Arab-English people. The narrator gestures to the significance of hybrid names by explaining that:

> This has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow and white. […] It is only this late in the day that you can watch Quang O'Rourke bouncing a basketball, and Me Jones humming a tune. Children with first and last names on a direct collision course. Names

> that secrete within them mass exodus, cramped boats and planes, cold arrivals, medical checks. (326)

These "hybrid" names gesture toward an emergent mixed-race generation. Smith makes sure, however, not to conflate this emergent social group with a post-racial society. That twentieth-century immigration is framed as an "experiment" does not make it utopian. While experimentation is used to test out utopian ideals in *Sacred Hunger*, Smith's narrator in *White Teeth* focuses on the hardships of immigration that are now secreted in these "hybrid" names and on the ensuing unequal relationship between immigrants and "natives" in a multiracial society. Though the passage suggests the emergence of a racially hybrid generation, the use of English names also signals a continued hegemony of white Britons. These names can simultaneously signal hybridity and assimilationist strategies. The subsequent paragraph continues: "It is only this late in the day, and possibly only in Willesden, that you can find best friends Sita and Sharon, constantly mistaken for each other because Sita is white (her mother liked the name) and Sharon is Pakistani (her mother thought it best; less trouble)" (327). These examples of hybrid identities represent a society in transition, where the peace promised by post-race theory is incomplete and racism persists in insidious ways.

Smith explores the risks of hybridity being absorbed into post-race discourse through Millat and Irie's time with the Chalfen family. The school's headmaster forces Irie and Millat to visit the Chalfens every Tuesday and Thursday. The chapter begins with a passage written by Joyce Chalfen, a horticulturist: "If it is not too far-fetched a comparison, the sexual and cultural revolution we have experienced these past two decades is not a million miles away from the horticultural revolution that has taken place in our herbaceous borders and sunken beds?" (Smith 309). Joyce goes on to make a case for social "cross-pollination." Although "self-pollination" is

simpler and more certain, these plants run the risk of being wiped out by "a single evolutionary event." She concludes: "In the garden, as in the social political arena, change should be the only constant" (Smith 309). Although Joyce Chalfen advocates racial hybridity on the grounds that it strengthens society, Smith demonstrates how easily a discussion of hybridity can be repurposed for assimilationist ends. The passage plays with the expectations of the reader. Because the Chalfen family has not been introduced at this point in the novel, the reader must assume that the chapter opens with the narrator's voice. Smith sets up this ambiguity to show how inherent bias is formed at a readerly level, and how assimilationist projects go undetected because they are cloaked in the rhetoric of multiculturalism and diversity. The passage describes the Chalfen family, which is comprised of Joyce, Marcus, an "eminent scientist," and their four sons, including Joshua, who is the same age as Millat and Irie. Despite Joyce's words about hybridity, the Chalfen family unit comes to represent assimilationist practices, which demonstrates the potential insincerity of "multiculturalism," as it can be used as a disguise for post-racial ideals.

Although the Chalfens appear to hold progressive values, they epitomize a brand of liberalism that perpetuates racial inequality:

> despite all the mixing up, despite the fact that we have finally slipped into each other's lives with reasonable comfort (like a man returning to his lover's bed after a midnight walk), despite all this, it is still hard to admit that there is no one more English than the Indian, no one more Indian than the English. There are still young white men who are angry about that; who will roll out at closing time into the poorly lit streets with a kitchen knife wrapped in a tight fist. (Smith 327)

This passage reflects how post-race theory is premature in its assessment of the progress of race relations in Britain. Despite the slow evolution of different cultures in Britain, there remain those

who believe that the cultural climate in Britain ought to be uniform. This sentiment comes out indirectly through the youngest Chalfen boy, Oscar. Joyce insists that Irie and Millat stay for dinner: "Oscar really wants you to stay. Oscar loves having strangers in the house, he finds it really stimulating. Especially brown strangers!" to which Oscar replies: "No, I don't, […] I hate brown strangers" (Smith 326). Smith also uses the family to show how science, particularly through Marcus Chalfen's research, is racially coded. His project, FutureMouse, can modify a mouse's DNA so that it will die at a certain time. The allure of the project is that it "holds out the tantalizing promise of a new phase in human history where we are not victims of the random but instead directors and arbitrators of our own fate" (Smith 433). Like Zeno's paradox, Marcus Chalfen's belief in science, whether he realizes it or not, attempts to confirm a single objective worldview, and in doing so, attempts to eliminate chance and fate.

Another instance of the tension between multiplicity and oneness occurs when Irie must determine the identity of the father to her unborn child. She knows that it is either Millat or Magid, but it would be impossible for a paternity test to show who the father is because they are genetically identical. The conclusion to the novel can be read as a challenge to scientific objectivity, and to oneness. The narrator explains that a test would read their DNA as if they were the same person, but the novel demonstrates the very particular experiences that have made the twins fundamentally different from one another. Although this realization troubles Irie at first, she later thinks: "whatever, you know? Whatever. It was always going to turn out like this, not precisely like this, but involved like this. This was the Iqbals we were talking about, here. This was the Joneses. How could she ever have expected anything less?" (Smith 515). The two families, who in a sense have amalgamated into one larger hybrid family, are distinct in that they do not live in homogeneous harmony. At the same time, they are deeply involved with Irie's

daughter, to the point of indistinguishability. After consideration, Irie believes that this balance may not even matter. Their families have been powerfully affected by the colonial history that has brought their family to this moment, which leads to her fatalistic realization.

The separate strands of the narrative come together in the conclusion of the novel, which takes place at Marcus Chalfen's scientific demonstration. Millat's religious group KEVIN, Joshua Chalfen's animal rights group FATE, and Hortense and the Jehovah's Witnesses all attend to oppose the experiment because it interferes with their beliefs. Millat pulls a gun on the table of scientists, and Archie inexplicably jumps in front of them and takes a bullet in the thigh, allowing the mouse Marcus Chalfen was using for the demonstration to escape. Afterward, Smith refuses to offer a single ending to the novel. Instead, she provides different possible "end games." One culmination is that the Iqbal twins both serve four hundred hours of community service because authorities were unable to tell them apart. They served, "naturally, as gardeners in Joyce's new project, a huge millennial park by the bank of the Thames" (Smith 541). In other words, Joyce's new project will benefit from the free labour of historically colonized peoples. Despite her belief in "hybridity," she continues to perpetuate inequality. Smith also offers another "end game" for Irie. She writes that "young professional women aged eighteen to thirty two who would like a snapshot seven years hence of Irie, Joshua and Hortense sitting by a Caribbean sea (for Irie and Joshua become lovers in the end; you can only avoid your fate for so long)" (541). Lastly, another possible "end game" could be "largely the criminal class and the elderly who find themselves wanting to make bets on the winner of a blackjack game, the one played by Alsana and Samad, Archie and Clara, in O'Connell's, 31 December 1999, that historic night when Abdul-Mickey finally opened his doors to women" (541). Smith makes the ideological decision to resist essentialism by including multiple endings; neither a single

conclusive ending (which would suggest oneness) nor an ending featuring an individual character (which does not account for community) would be appropriate for a novel that aims to represent the plurality of experience.

The novel looks toward the new millennium, and although it appears that some positive changes occur, many of the characters' lives are still caught in the continuous loop of history. This pluralistic ending resists the utopian ideal that post-race propagates because it shows that life continues in complex ways. Although all the characters are personally affected by racial mixing, this does not lead to post-racial existence. Instead, the characters seek alternative ways to preserve their individuality while learning how to coexist.

Denied Subjecthood: Recovering Black British History in Caryl Phillips' *Foreigners*

Caryl Phillips' *Foreigners* (2007) is an experimental novel that combines reportage, historical fact, and fictionalization to recover black British histories. Phillips' unconventional approach to form uncovers the persistent ways that black Britons are oppressed and continue to be denied full subjecthood under British law, despite a long-established history of participating in and shaping British culture and society. Subtitled *Three English Lives*, *Foreigners* draws on the biographies of black Britons to show that these alleged "foreigners" have an equal claim to "Britishness" as any other person living in Britain. The novel dramatizes three life stories: Francis Barber, Samuel Johnson's longtime servant; Randy Turpin, a mixed-race boxer who briefly reigned as a world champion in 1951; and David Oluwale, a British Nigerian who was murdered by Leeds city police officers in 1969. With its focus on racialized subjects, *Foreigners* invites readers to think about the social and institutional factors that precipitate the deaths of these men. In doing so, the novel addresses that systemic conditions under which black Britons are denied full subjecthood.

Despite the long presence of people of African descent in Britain—spanning from Roman Britain to the Elizabethan era, the Windrush Generation, and into the twenty-first century—they have historically been relegated to the status of "immigrant" or "foreigner." Prior to the 1981 Nationality Act, nationality was established by *jus soli*: any person born either in the United Kingdom or in a British colony qualified for British citizenship. After modification to citizenship laws, British citizenship required at least one parent to be born in the UK. This new amendment was racially coded, as migration became increasingly difficult for those who were not already residents of the UK prior to the Act. Although the stories in *Foreigners* take place before this amendment, they anticipate the legislative changes that resulted in an increased difficulty for

people from former British colonies to be considered subjects. The men in the novel are linked through their common experience of institutional racism, yet there are significant distinctions among the times in which they lived. Phillips weaves together these temporally disjointed stories to chronologize the continued oppression of black people in Britain.

The novel's title unearths a quandary about nationhood: in order to consolidate the idea of a nation, there first must be a definition of who does not qualify as a subject. Kathleen Paul explains that British subjecthood is imagined in two ways: "[as] an inclusive formal national policy and an exclusive informal national identity" where the informal national identity "imagined a different community of 'Britishness' which included only white residents of the United Kingdom and privileged middle- and upper-class within that" (Paul 13-14). The decision regarding who can and who cannot qualify for national subjecthood is therefore made along racial lines. The men featured in the novel are considered "foreigners" by white Britons. They are also considered as such by the state, which Paul Gilroy argues is inherently tied to British nationalism, an ideology premised upon ethnic absolutisms. The novel challenges the normative concept of Britishness by deploying specific accounts of black men being denied subjecthood based on their race. Recent discussion of multiculturalism, such as post-race discourse, have championed racial and ethnic diversity as a means for social progress and "minority integration" (Silj 12). Phillips complicates this reductive understanding of race relations by using the life stories of Francis Barber, Randolph Turpin, and David Oluwale to illustrate the selective memory and exclusionary nature of British national history. The large temporal gaps between the characters' stories suggest that, counter to perceived notions of social and democratic progress, nonwhite Britons continue to be denied the claim to Britishness. The book documents how violence, discrimination, and exclusionism are the threads that weave the history of all people of

colour in Britain. With *Foreigners*, the inclusion of personal accounts serves as a reminder to particularize experience rather than to universalize.

Peripheral but Indispensable

The book begins with a dramatized account of Francis Barber, Samuel Johnson's manservant. Barber, a Jamaican-born slave, served Johnson from 1752 until his death in 1784 and was subsequently made his residual heir. Francis Barber symbolizes both the forgotten presence of black people in Britain and the reluctance to acknowledge the Britishness of nonwhite nationals. Barber was sent to Samuel Johnson by his friend, Richard Bathurst, after the passing of Johnson's wife. The narrator explains that Johnson "took immediately to the young black child" (Phillips 24). Johnson appeared to adopt the role of benevolent parent to Barber, as he, like Bathurst, a fellow abolitionist, "actively look[ed] for some role in society that the boy might profitably fulfill" (23). Although the effort to integrate Barber into British society is well-intentioned, Johnson's paternalism reproduces the conditions of colonialism and slavery in insidious ways. For instance, even though Barber is granted his freedom, he continues refer to Johnson as his "master" later in his life, long after Johnson's passing. Barber's behaviour suggests that the transition from master-slave to master-servant may not be as dramatic as some abolitionists would have liked to believe. Though Barber is granted legal citizenship, social change moves slowly, as customs and traditions reaffirm social hierarchies and deny Barber social citizenship.

The portion of *Foreigners* dedicated to Barber's story, "Dr. Johnson's Watch," opens with Johnson's funeral, where his inheritance becomes a point of controversy in Johnson's

"privileged inner circle" (4). As the narrator notes, that "It was an indisputable fact that Dr. Johnson had provided handsomely for Francis, although Sir John Hawkins, among many others, had complained loudly of the imprudence of Dr. Johnson leaving money to a negro" (49). While Sir John Hawkins' disapproval of Johnson's decision to list Barber as a residual heir could be attributed to greed or jealousy, it also indicates a reluctance to give Barber any purchase on Britishness. John Locke claims that private ownership of property is necessary in order to participate in civil society by making the distinction between master, servant and slave:

> Master and servant are names as old as history, but given to those of far different condition; for one makes himself a servant to another, by selling him, for a certain time, the service he undertakes to do, in exchange for wages he is to receive: and though this commonly puts him into the family of his master, and under the ordinary discipline thereof; yet it gives the master but a temporary power over him, but no greater than what is contained in the contract between them. But there is another sort of servants, which by a peculiar name we call slaves, who being captives taken in a just war, are by the right of nature subjected to the absolute dominion of their masters. These men having, as I say, forfeited their lives, and with it their liberties, and lost their estates; and being in the state of slavery, not capable of any property, cannot in that state be considered as any part of civil society; the chief end whereof is the preservation of property. (Locke 34)

Locke's meditation affirms that individuals' status as master, servant, or slave places a person in three disparate relations to private property, which either grants or denies them access to civil society because they are property or are treated as such. Barber's status as a servant and a former slave is therefore incompatible with his inheritance of Johnson's property, which grants him

access to British society. Hawkins and the rest of Johnson's inner circle, wanting to maintain a racial homogeneity among British citizens, are threatened by Barber's claim to Britishness.

Barber's story likewise underscores how contributions that black Britons have made to the English language and to the English literary canon have been erased from history. An engraving entitled *A Literary Party at Sir Joshua Reynold's* feature nine celebrities of the day: James Boswell, Samuel Johnson, Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick, Edmund Burke, Pasquale Paoli, Charles Burney, Thomas Warton, and Oliver Goldsmith. Charles Nicholl remarks that in the engraving "there is a tenth man in the picture, who does not apparently merit a namecheck: a black servant […] This anonymous figure is almost certainly Doyle's depiction of Francis Barber" (Nicholl). For Nicholl, Barber's inclusion in the engraving represents his invisible labour that assisted Johnson in his work. He writes that his presence in the artwork "catches a truth about him: peripheral but indispensable, silent among the talkers, moving just beyond the arc of light that falls from the candelabra onto the faces at the table" (Nicholl). He adds, "He's the one who is simply there, the attendant always within earshot, the trusty factotum" (Nicholl). Despite the effort on the part of John Hawkins to devalue Barber, whom in a private letter he called "an exceedingly worthless fellow," *Foreigners*, like the engraving, recovers Francis Barber's presence and valuable contributions to the intellectual and literary history of his time.

While the narrator includes gossip about Barber, specifically around his public perception as a wastrel who squandered his inheritance, his visit to Barber and his family reveals the true nature of Barber's situation. His wife explains, "we came out here to Burntwood to open a school and pass on the gift of knowledge that Frank's master had given him. He wanted to bestow it on the common people who might otherwise remain in ignorance" (Phillips 41). How Barber decides to spend his inheritance indicates a humanitarian approach to spreading wealth and

knowledge, which distances him from the individualism of the merchant class. That the narrator is unaware of Barber's philanthropy demonstrates the historical invisibility of the labour performed by black individuals. In fact, the narrator believes Barber to be dead due to the misinformation that the innkeeper gave him. Barber is rendered invisible due to his dwindling fortune, his distance from London, and his deteriorating physical and mental health. His tragic erasure only reaffirms that his attachment to Johnson, through servitude and inheritance, is what made him recognizable. Without Johnson's aid, he becomes erased at the level of state and from historical memory.

Johnson's affiliates shun Barber until he reaches a point of destitution toward the end of his life. According to the prejudiced narrator, the solution to this problem is not through inclusion or a recognition of Barber's potential, but through segregation instead. The narrator goes so far as to claim that there is something at a material level that denies Barber the ability to assimilate as a British citizen:

> It was true, this negro had most likely been destroyed by the unnatural good fortune of many years of keeping company with those of superior rank, thus depriving him of any real understanding of his own true status in the world. […] Yes, the black should have left our country and journeyed back to Jamaica or to Africa with Mr. Sharp's expedition. In fact all ebony personages should do so for I was now convinced that English air is clearly not suitable for negro lungs and soon reduces those creatures to a state of childish helplessness. (55)

The narrator's apparent sympathy toward Barber devolves into yet another re-articulation of racial hierarchies, mobilizing, this time, scientific racism that would continue to dominate nineteenth and twentieth-century racial discourse. He believes that the climate in England has

driven Barber to poor health and destitution, with an insinuation that nationhood is somehow inherently a privilege that belongs exclusively to white Britons. However, the novel provides perspective into how, contrary to the narrator's "nativist" arguments, Barber's financial and physical decrepitude were caused by the residual material conditions of slavery, colonialism, and racial prejudice. The narrator fails to see that Barber's social disadvantages outweigh the economic advantages that Johnson granted him. Barber explains to the narrator that "[Johnson] placed a great deal of faith in me […] He feared that I might misuse all that he was about to bestow upon me […], that some men might take advantage of my character" (53). Barber's belief that he is unfit to be a British citizen confirm that he has internalized the racism he is subjected to. Despite the perceived advantages that Johnson provided to Barber, he was unable to use them effectively in order to grow them and ultimately become the citizen Johnson had hoped he could be. Barber's indoctrination into the perception of racial hierarchy, despite the "exposure to civilization" and economic inheritance that he receives from Johnson, remains with him (Phillips 22). Barber goes on to tell the narrator that he "sincerely wished that [Johnson] had used me differently" and that he "would have been better served committing to a life at sea, or returning to [his] native Jamaica" (53). Gilroy outlines this desire to return in his theorization of the Black Atlantic, a space that accommodates hybrid racial and national identities, so it is fitting that Barber would have felt free existing outside of national borders. While Barber's wish to live at sea and return to Jamaica could indicate a reclamation of space, it also affirms his own self-perception as a foreigner. Phillips shows how Barber has been indoctrinated into believing that he and people like him are unfit to be British citizens, despite their having been set up for social and economic failure.

Phillips' retelling of Barber's life demonstrates how Johnson's benevolence toward Barber reinforces racial hierarchies. That Johnson and the narrator pity Barber is suggestive of a pre-emergent form of white saviourism that remains perceptible in contemporary society. After seeing Barber in such poor physical and financial standing, the narrator thinks to himself: "In this sad, wretched moment, I had received confirmation of the wisdom of my own intention to invest in the Province of Freedom, and thereby help prevent this spectacle of negro abasement from becoming endemic in our land" (Phillips 54). The Province of Freedom—the territory now known as Sierra Leone—was a British colony that was founded with the purpose of relocating "poor blacks" who the British believed should return to their place of origin. The project was problematic in many respects: for instance, the "poor blacks" in Britain were homogenized into a single group. The British did not take into account the divergent ethnic groups, tribes, and cultural heritages of African peoples. This issue would recur throughout the period of British imperialism and into the postcolonial period, with the partition of British India being a prominent example. This act of grouping different people together without regard for particularity follows the same logic as multiculturalism, albeit in a more overtly damaging way. Although it was created in the name of freedom and abolition, the Province of Freedom is another instance where the British held the agency to decide the future of African and African diasporic peoples. Nevertheless, it was seen by abolitionists such as Johnson and the narrator as an act of goodwill. Yet this act of providing black Britons with "freedom" involved the expulsion of blacks from the British Isles. The Province of Freedom therefore served two purposes: to absolve the British from the guilt of slavery by providing diasporic blacks with a makeshift "home," and to reassert racial homogeneity by ridding the country of black people. Evident in the narrator's words is a consolidated "we" and its dialectical opposite, "them," the black Britons, implying that they do

not and never did have a claim to Britishness. This logic is representative of the white liberalism that is appears in present-day British rhetoric of multiculturalism. While measures have been taken to champion inclusivity and diversity in Britain, there remains a clear distinction between "us" and "them," in the British Nationality Acts, which reinforce racial absolutes by privileging the idea of the "native" Briton. The 1981 amendment to the act reclassified UK and Colonies citizenship, making it so that Britons born in a British colony would not automatically carry a right to abode in the UK. The amendment was criticized for its denial of the right to residency for Hong Kong-born ethnic Chinese. These changes indicate a continued effort to preserve the white British identity category, which excludes Britons who feel a strong sense of nationalism despite their failure to qualify legally as British.

Throughout the novel, Phillips represents personal histories as examples of larger historical trends. He also draws attention to mediation in these stories, insofar as the only information about Francis Barber is made available through the narrator. The narrator wishes to interview Barber in order to gain insight into the "unique position that [Barber] occupied from which he was able to witness the birth of some of our finest literature" (34). In this regard, Phillips nods to the fact that James Boswell, Samuel Johnson's biographer, interviewed Barber in 1786. Barber has been credited for being "a source of useful information for Boswell—particularly about the years before Boswell himself knew Johnson" (Nicholl). Through the telling of Barber's life through this narrator, Phillips shows how Boswell acts as a biographer to Francis Barber. On one hand, this may align Barber with Johnson insofar that his life history deserves as much validation in terms of the history of black Britons. The result is an erasure of Barber's actual experience as he is unable to articulate his own life story. The narrative bars Barber's ability for self-representation and calls the historical sources that are available to us into

question. In doing so, Phillips underscores the rhetorical violence that black Britons have faced because they are not allowed to control their own narratives.

Without a Home

The subsequent section of the novel, entitled "Made in Wales," details the personal history of Randolph Turpin, Britain's first black world champion boxer. Turpin made history by defeating Sugar Ray Robinson in 1951 and fighting him again in New York City. After some initial success, Turpin's career fell by the wayside and his life ended in debt and isolation. The child of a Welsh mother and a Guyanese father, the mixed-race Turpin struggles to develop a sense of belonging as a member of the only black family in Leamington Spa, a small town in the English Midlands. Although Queen Victoria had given Leamington Spa the "Royal" suffix in the nineteenth century, the narrator explains that "by the mid-twentieth century there were two Leamingtons; the elegant Georgian and Regency Leamington […] and then an altogether less attractive working-class enclave. Turpin was a product of the less impressive face of the town" (59). During the twentieth century, towns such as Leamington Spa were shifting from their aging aristocratic roots to a space for the emergent working class. As the narrator states, Turpin was a product of this new working-class enclave, but he came to represent the town as a whole when he was nicknamed "The Leamington Licker." Turpin and his family belong to a generation of black Britons that preceded the Windrush arrivals: "In the thirties, most British people are unfamiliar with the novelty of living among people of another race" (Phillips 87). In this way, the family's presence in Britain anticipates a shift from a racially absolute to racially and diverse, which is a

product of the wave of postcolonial independence that swept through British ex-colonies after the Second World War.

Randy's father, Lionel Turpin, arrived in England as a "merchant seaman" but subsequently enlisted in the First World War to fight in the British army. His participation in the First World War speaks to his sense of affiliation for a Britain that did not accept him as being British. Jackie Turpin, Randolph Turpin's sister, says of their father:

> He felt British. He was descended from slaves taken from West Africa but English was his first language. His schoolbooks were written by British people; he lived under British law; he was brought up to admire British poets and British musicians and British scientists and British politicians and British nobility. His allegiance was to King George V, to his Mother Country and to British people all over the world. When Britain declared war on Germany he felt included. (Bourne)

As a product of colonialism in British Guyana, Lionel Turpin felt a sense of identification with Britain. Despite his own feelings of belonging, once he settled in England, it became clear that this relationship was not reciprocated.

Because the Turpins relocated to England prior to the mass emigration from Africa and the Caribbean, they were isolated and discriminated against as the only non-white family in town. The narrator includes a recollection from Jackie Turpin: "there was a time when nobody would cross the road to speak to the Turpins. We was little black kids and used to run around Wathen Road and Parkes Street" (Phillips 83). Racial absolutism informs the white folks' refusal to speak to, let alone integrate, the Turpins. The mixed-race Turpin family, therefore, embodies the emergent "crossings" in the British identity that come as a result of immigration and interracial relationships. These "crossings" correspond to identity categories, such as race,

culture, and nationality. In *Foreigners*, geographic crossings often map onto racial ones. The first instance of crossing for the Turpin family is Lionel's decision to cross the Atlantic as a young man. Through this act, Lionel, who "had a yearning to see the world," performs a symbolic crossing *back*. First, there is initial crossing of his ancestors who came to Guyana from Africa as slaves or migrant workers. Next, he and his wife, Beatrice Whitehouse, perform another racial crossing that few other Britons had made at that time and start a mixed-race family. The Turpin family therefore comes to represent an intersection of race and nation in a way that emphasizes the diversity that is a biproduct of slavery and colonialism.

As a world champion boxer, Turpin brought visibility to these crossings that were present in Britain despite the desire of white Britons to efface the existence of black Britons. Phillips explains the context in which Turpin began his boxing career:

> A clear colour bar has been in effect so that black boxers were prohibited from fighting for or holding the British title. They were allowed to fight for the British Empire title, but at all weights black boxers, even if they were, like Randolph Turpin, born and bred in Britain, were treated as foreigners and excluded from fighting for their own national championship. (Phillips 72)

These racist regulations were lifted in 1947, which allowed black British boxers like Turpin and his brothers to compete for the British national boxing championship. Prior to his bout with Sugar Ray Robinson, the narrator explains, "the Midlands did not recognise Randolph Turpin as one of their own" and, despite the rule change, "the general public had still not fully warmed to the idea of black boxers also being British" (73). In this sense, Turpin represented an emerging generation of Britons who were hybrid, both racially and culturally. As a result, these people could not be included in the standard idea of what it meant to be British.

The title of this section of the novel, "Made in Wales," ironically points to the reality that, although Randolph Turpin was born and raised in Britain, he was never able to feel truly at home. As the child of an immigrant father and as the only nonwhite family in his hometown, Turpin lacks the "roots" that build a sense of belonging in Britain. At the same time, he is also severed from the diasporic roots of his father. The result of this feeling of "homelessness," Phillips reveals, is alienation. Lionel Turpin feels this sense of connection to Britain, but is denied access to this home because of his race. Randy, a "product" of working-class Leamington Spa, feels a similar sense of alienation, despite his status as a local hero. "Made in Wales" suggests that Turpin's home, or at least where he was "made," is not in the Midlands, but somewhere else. In the novel, Turpin's daughter Annette says that "in Wales everybody accepted [Turpin] for who he was […] for the first time in his life, he was free" (Phillips 146). Through the telling of his personal history, Phillips reveals that "roots" does not create a home. Instead, Wales represents a feeling of home rooted in experience and memory.

The idea of travel as a means of freedom and escape is developed in the first section, evidenced by Francis Barber being "unhappy to be so quickly deprived of his new and independent life" once Samuel Johnson ordered for him to be discharged from the British Navy (Phillips 28). In the following section, Phillips uses Turpin's status as an international boxer to show the advantages and disadvantages of rootlessness. This idea is most evident when he travels across the Atlantic to New York City for his rematch against Sugar Ray Robinson. Despite the liberty that comes with travel, he would eventually have to return to Britain: "Turpin had boarded the *Queen Mary* for New York knowing that at some point in the near future he was going to be faced with very public, and undoubtedly expensive, divorce proceedings" (Phillips 104). For both Turpin and Barber, travel is only a temporary respite from the burden of being

black in Britain. Because Britain is not truly a "home" for Turpin, travel through the "Black Atlantic" becomes an intermediary space for black Britons and other people with hybrid identities like himself (Gilroy). Travel is temporary; there necessarily must be a destination and a return.

Turpin's rootlessness reveals how post-race discourse becomes a mask for increasingly insidious forms of racism. Jared Sexton, for instance, grapples with two competing theories about blackness: Afro-Pessimism, which contends that blackness is a permanent state of social death under which black bodies cease to be recognized as subjects, and Black Optimism, which affirms the existence of "black life" through fissures in antiblack violence. Sexton argues that black life "is not social life in the universe formed by the codes of state and civil society, of citizen and subject, of nation and culture" (28). In this sense, Turpin can never be recognized as a British subject because he is not accepted within the codes of state and civil society. The title of the chapter refers to the fleeting moments of Turpin's life, particularly near the end of his life, that allowed him to live outside the institutional and social inequality he faced as a black man in Britain. As his daughter Annette remarks, Turpin was able to experience "black life" in Wales, where he could live freely without facing racial discrimination.

In Phillips' account, Turpin is a product of the environment in which he was raised in. He pays close attention to how boxing culture and the culture of machismo places pressure on men to have complete and constant control in their lives. Turpin resorted to such violence in his life at least in part, because he was perpetually in a state of economic precarity and subjected to forms of racism. As a result of Turpin's tragic death, Phillips is interested in why Turpin "had begun to look at the world as a place not fit for [his daughter] to live in" (Phillips 140). Accustomed to using force to overcome adversity in his boxing career, Turpin's physical prowess is useless in

his struggle for subjectivity against the British State. Phillips shows how statelessness produces an insecurity in Turpin that prompts him violently to take control in other parts of his life.

A History of Violence

While institutional racism manifests in coded ways in the first two stories, it is explicit in the final section, "Northern Lights." The section is a documentary recasting of David Oluwale's life and death. Oluwale arrived in Hull in 1949 after hiding onboard the SS *Temple Bar* from Nigeria. Once the ship had docked, he was immediately handed over to authorities. Although under the new British Nationality Act of 1948 he was considered a British subject, he was treated as a stowaway and sentenced to 28 days in prison. Following his sentence, he moved to Leeds where, according to historical accounts, Oluwale was subjected to "physical and psychological destruction" and "brutal, systematic harassment" which "was orchestrated by members of the Leeds city police force" (Sim 158). Through Oluwale's personal history, Phillips presents the apparent impossibility for black Britons to be recognized as British subjects, which justified the frivolous violence inflicted on Oluwale. Legal statutes such as the British Nationality Act and institutions such as the Leeds Police do not ensure the protection of all British subjects, although they may appear to. In actuality, they operate within the discourse racial exclusionism and create an illusion of social and democratic progress.

While water is associated with freedom from the crisis of identity and subjecthood that comes with being both black and British in the first two stories, it is a symbol of foreignness and a receptacle for memory in "Northern Lights." Oluwale likely considers the passage from Nigeria to England as an opportunity for economic and social mobility. In the chapter, Phillips

includes a poem from Colin MacInnes entitled “The Booma Boys,” which describes the generation of young Nigerian men who were “too young to have fought overseas [in Burma] but old enough to demand that the future happen quickly now” (Phillips 167). The young Nigerian men from Oluwale’s generation were “suddenly gripped by a deep urge to know the world [...] they loped ashore blithely confident that the world loved them and owed them a treasure” (167). Once they arrived in England, however, the illusion was exposed as a fantasy. Oluwale’s imprisonment upon his arrival in Britain not only indicates that the young Nigerians were unwelcome, but that they were not considered citizens. Phillips emphasizes Oluwale’s resilience and persistence for remaining in Leeds. The narrator, a young black British woman who appears to be addressing Oluwale after his death, states that after his initial imprisonment, “to go back to Hull would suggest a return. No. You were […] already a veteran of an Atlantic passage and prison” (158). Though Leeds is landlocked in the “heart of England,” the river Aire runs through the city (158). The narrator implies that water carried Oluwale to the heart of England, and commends him for staying in Leeds despite the economic precarity and institutional violence he faced there over twenty years. She positions his resilience in opposition to water: “Yoruba boy from Lagos who, on arriving in Leeds, thought only of himself in future tense. A teenager at home in Leeds. Alone. I will stay in Leeds. No more water. You decided.” (158). Phillips is commenting on the irony of Oluwale’s fate: the Leeds police force allegedly drowns him. Although Phillips uses water in the first two stories to represent the potential for freedom, it proves to be fatal for Oluwale.

In “Northern Lights,” the history of multiculturalism in Leeds is used to contextualize both David Oluwale’s personal history and the systematic oppression of people of colour that continues into the twenty-first century. The history of the city, beginning in the Roman

occupation, shows the long legacy of "foreigners" in Britain and the significant role they have had in its development. Phillips includes a passage that details the arrival of many immigrants during the nineteenth century, such as Jews from Germany and Eastern Europe: "this was now their city—their new home—and they had no intention of going anywhere, despite the well-displayed signs that let them know that Jews were not welcome" (Phillips 190). Much like David Oluwale more than one hundred years later, these migrants land in Hull and move inland to Leeds to search for work in the textile industry. Despite the unwelcoming nature of the native British, these people assert themselves in the city and establish their social and cultural presence. The parallel between the Jews in the nineteenth century and Oluwale's arrival in 1949 underscores the perpetual experience of the immigrant. Despite the perception of multiculturalism as the end of this cycle, immigrants in Britain continue to be met with disapproval. In fact, the language of multiculturalism becomes a way to cover up the very discrimination it claims to eliminate. The narrator explains that "Today [at the prison Oluwale was held at] the prison is no less intimidating […] On the wall there is a picture of the Race Relations Management Team. Three white faces, including the governor of the prison. 'HMP Leeds is committed to the elimination of harassment and discrimination in all areas of work' […] 'No single racial group will be allowed to dominate any activity to the unfair exclusion of others'" (201). The narrator describes how the chapel has become a multi-faith centre and how the prison now caters to all religious foods and practices, "except Jewish" (201). Phillips includes this contemporary detail to show how the multiculturalist discourse and the ideals of progress and improvement in race relations that it promises are insidious coverups for more insidiously racist and exclusionary practices. Multiculturalism protects and actually reinforces racial hierarchies.

In each section of the novel, the question of who narrates and who is permitted to tell a story is brought to the fore. Matthew Hart argues that, in the case of all three stories, the characters are "stripped of agency and initiative," even at the narrative level, as they are only remembered and represented through other people (277). In "Doctor Johnson's Watch," although Francis Barber speaks, the narrative is focalized in the Boswellian narrator. "Made in Wales" features the narrative voice that, in Hart's words, "is oddly stuck between historical registers: sometimes it seems hopelessly infected by the racist idioms of 1950s sporting journalism; at other times […] he acts and writes as kindly and as solicitously as we would expect of Caryl Phillips himself (266). The final section, "Northern Lights" oscillates between historical background and the testimony of various people responding to the death of Oluwale. While the novel gives the three men a voice in the sense that it tells their stories when they no longer can, it also omits their actual voices. If we agree with Hart's claim that "the fragmentary narrative quality of 'Northern Lights' evokes the entwined but non-systemic nature of state power," then the denial of the three men's voices are a result of the erasure that occurs because "state simplification," the idea that the state "sees" poorly and in a simplified ways (274). Hart's argument is that Phillips writes like a state insofar as the disjointed and fragmented narration of the novel speaks to the way that the state can be incapable of particularizing experience, which then erases many of the individual voices in each section. This phenomenon is similar to the institutionalization of multiculturalism, which tends to erase the experience of particular peoples, specifically through post-race discourse. *Foreigners* represents the universalizing force of the state, however, in a way that enhances the particular stories it tells about "three English lives."

The narrative moves between the representation of the state as a totalizing force, while at the same time allowing for interviews that emphasize the personal stakes of racial discrimination

at the hand of the state. It is through this that Phillips manages to represent, as Aimé Césaire describes in his *Letter to Maurice Thorez*, “a universal enriched by all that is particular, a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars” (Césaire 152). For Phillips, this ontological approach is in contradistinction to post-racial multiculturalism. While multiculturalism promises social inclusion, it risks enforcing a totalizing vision that erases the particular. *Foreigners* proposes a method of recovering histories that emphasizes personal experience in relation to a social whole.

Capital, Race, and Utopia: Retracing History in Barry Unsworth's *Sacred Hunger*

Barry Unsworth's 1992 novel *Sacred Hunger* grapples with an intractable question: after the atrocities of slavery and colonialism, what constitutes an equitable multiracial society? The novel is set in the decades prior to the abolition of the slave trade in England. Erasmus Kemp, the son of a successful merchant, employs a crew to man his ship, the *Liverpool Merchant*, which will transport African people to the Caribbean to be sold as slaves. After disease devastates the slave ship, Doctor Matthew Paris, Kemp's cousin, helps organize a mutiny against the ship's captain. Subsequently, the crew and the Africans create an enclave in southern Florida where they all live as equals. Through this plot, Unsworth stages questions of multiculturalism and responds obliquely to the culture of racism in Britain around the turn of the millennium. Through the innerworkings of the enclave, Unsworth provides social commentary about the state of social inequality in Britain. Specifically, the novel responds to Margaret Thatcher's leadership in the previous decade, which emphasized a free market economy and included an amendment to the British Nationality Act. Unsworth uses a historical context to show how capitalism and racism have long been intertwined.

In broad strokes, the multiracial utopian enclave in *Sacred Hunger* anticipates an emergent form of society, one which resembles the "post-racial" societies heralded by scholars and journalists in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Unsworth uses the historical context of the nineteenth century slave trade to critique these emergent ideas by comparing elements of Enlightenment philosophy to post-racial discourse (Dorman qtd in Lambert 127). His representation of the enclave shows that modern societies are, at their core, a reflection of colonial and neocolonial practices that have contributed to the global migration of peoples from all cultures and races. Mary Thierry Texeira notes that "race, as we have come to understand it in

the Western world, is always in flux, changing over space and time and filled with historical, political, social, and psychological meanings." Race, according to Texeira, is "complicated and blurred, suited to each particular time and place in history and defined by the group in power" (2). Though race is a social construct that continues to change, Unsworth effectively represents how, despite these changes, race is a central contributor to inequality in ethnically and culturally diverse communities.

Whiteness and Utopia

Unsworth's stages one of his principal concerns in the multiracial enclave: the attitudes of the white Europeans. Matthew Paris stands in for the white British liberal who, despite their good intentions, are complicit in reinforcing a racial hierarchy. Although the enclave in southern Florida remains relatively peaceful for twelve years, Paris is alarmed by the fact that some of the Africans in the community attempt to trick members of other African tribes into servitude. While voicing his concerns to Kireku, a respected member of the community, Paris thinks to himself:

> If Kireku, as a leading member of the community, would speak to his fellow-tribesman […] it might be possible to stop this tendency now, before it took hold among them and became customary practice. Kireku was a man of sense and experience and he would know that once a thing became customary it soon became regarded as lawful and was extremely difficult to root out… (Unsworth 577)

Paris' fear stems from some tribes believing themselves to be intellectually superior to other tribes. They use this unfounded belief to justify their attempts to trick other community members into servitude. Paris' anxiety about a reversion to racial and ethnic hierarchies affirms that, even

in communities where racial equality is encouraged, there is a risk that a great injustice like slavery could re-establish itself. When Paris expresses his concerns, Kireku replies: "Dat you big trouble, you never change. […] You try make people here dis place do like you want, so you feel good, make man free, win de game. […] You a fool. You think dis speshul place but it altageddar change dat never" (579). Kireku's response exposes the multiracial utopia as a European idea that has been carried out on European terms. Although Paris' abolitionism is well-intentioned, it also presumes a higher degree of sophistication than Kireku's way of thinking. This presumption reinforces racial hierarchies, though it takes on a more insidious form compared to slavery. Like the emergence of post-race discourse, the move to less tangible forms of racial hierarchization creates an illusion of improved conditions. In reality, insidious forms of racism are even more dangerous because of their difficulty to identify.

Ultimately for Delblanc and Paris, the multiracial community is an opportunity for a social experiment, one that excludes African members from having equal input. Kireku sees this community as a "second chance" for Paris and the rest of the former crew, but the African members of the community recognize that, though it is an attempt to make amends and right a wrong, it is done partly out of shame and guilt. This justification echoes the conversations surrounding post-race discourse in multiracial societies. Those who oppose articulations of post-race suggest that it functions as a way to purge white people of the residual guilt of colonialism and the pervasive forms of neocolonialism from which they continue to benefit. This imbalance of power often goes undetected, which on a superficial level allows post-race to appear as a progressive idea. Jacques Derrida refers to this as "White Mythology," the production of a metaphysics of pure reason and Enlightenment: "The white man takes his own mythology . . . for the universal form of that which it is still his inescapable desire to call reason" (qtd. in Mitchell

23). Post-race, like Unsworth's imagined utopian enclave, risks leading to the homogenization or "whitening" of non-white racial groups, which exposes the ongoing hegemony of white supremacy. The problem with post-race theories is that they do not acknowledge the hegemonic position of whiteness, which is evident in the fact that discussions of race often do not name whiteness as a racial category. Louise Newman notes that assimilation strategies "could be and were employed by European whites in progressive ways" (Newman 32). Assimilation is a way for European whites to extend rights to people who can be considered non-white. In the case of the enclave, assimilation is necessary for the creation of a racially egalitarian community. Newman, however, also acknowledges that "assimilation and miscegenation were also used to delineate and exclude from the white race those individuals and peoples who did not conform […] to emerging ideals and norms of whiteness" (33). In this sense, while Delblanc and Paris attempt to create an ideal multiracial society, their politics of integration tends to be eurocentric.

One of the assimilation strategies in the enclave is the use of a "pidgin" dialect, which closely resembles English. The dialect reflects the imbalance between white and black community members by perpetuating the centrality of the English members of the society. Language proficiency has historically been used to determine national and racial authenticity. For instance, the Parsley Massacre, which occurred in 1937 at the Dominican Republic's western frontier, involved the massacre of tens of thousands of Haitians. They were assumed to be Haitian if they could not pronounce the trilled "r" sound in *perejil*, the Spanish word for parsley. The massacre stands as an example of how language itself contributes to racialization and hierarchization, and how the language of the dominant social groups are instrumentalized in order to justify killing or assimilating other groups. This is evident during the community palaver in which a group of Shantee tribesmen, including Kireku, attempt to trick a man from another

tribe, Iboti, into slavery. During the palaver, Paris intervenes with an objection: "But if he is found guilty, […] if the vote goes against him, it will be a vote also on this demand for servitude, not only on the crime itself. It will be too late to modify the punishment, except in degree – not in its nature. And not only that, it will establish –" (569). Kireku interrupts Paris before he can finish his argument, which likely would warn the community that Iboti's proposed punishment resembles the conditions of slavery that they have worked to abolish. The narrator explains that "in the stress of his feelings," Paris abandons pidgin English, the universal form of communication in the community. In response to Paris' slippage, Kireku interjects: "My fren', you talk people lingo or you get down stow gab altagedder" (569). Kireku's reaction to Paris' use of English sums up the fragile statutes of equality in the enclave and reveals the implicit position of power that the white English crewmembers occupy.

Unsworth's social commentary on both Enlightenment and modern progressive values is achieved through the figure of Delblanc. A painter stationed at a colonial outpost in West Africa, Delblanc comes aboard the *Liverpool Merchant* after meeting Matthew Paris. He eventually incites a revolt against its captain, Saul Thurso, and founds the utopian enclave in southern Florida. When Delblanc first meets Paris, he identifies the titular "sacred hunger" for money which has led to the commodification of all people. He concludes that "the negroes are not much worse off than the whites" (325) and suggests that resistance to early capitalism is a way to create solidarity and, eventually, community among the crew and the slaves. The early imaginings of the multiracial community emerge out of conversations between Paris and Delblanc. As Raphaël Lambert explains:

> Delblanc is an unbridled version of Paris: he sneers at the hypocrisy of the Church, the ignominy of the private company running the factory, and the worship of money and

> profit—that "sacred hunger" (328) at the origin of the transatlantic slave trade, in which both he and Paris, their enlightened views notwithstanding, are complicit. Both men typify the Age of Reason, but their life circumstances have prompted them to respond very differently to the world in which they live. (Lambert 120)

Though he is suspicious of Delblanc's aristocratic heritage at first, Paris soon becomes fascinated by his progressive ideas. Delblanc is successful at convincing the crew on the slave ship that: "By nature we are equal," and he wonders, "Does it not therefore follow that government must always depend on the consent of the governed?" (Unsworth 375). Delblanc's belief in the equality of people, regardless of racial or class standing, is the foundation for the multiracial enclave.

Once the community moves from hypothesis to reality, Delblanc's focus shifts to community-building. Most notably, Paris remarks a change in Delblanc from a belief in the natural order of things to a benevolent form of leadership when a crew member named Wilson breaks "the established rule of polyandry by killing the black man with whom he shared a woman" (Lambert 121). Delblanc makes the decision to execute Wilson for killing a black man, along with other slave traders who took indigenous people as captives to sell as slaves. The public execution is done, Delblanc argues, in order to demonstrate to "the black people that their lives were valuable to the white people" (Unsworth 548). Wilson therefore becomes a symbol of the differentiation between the white people who want to create an equitable community and the ones who do not. Even after Delblanc passes away, Paris recalls: "Delblanc in particular had seen from the first the importance of telling things over; he has seen clear sighted in those times of danger, always seeking to encourage a sense of unity among the fugitives, ready to seize on anything that could be celebrated by the whole people together" (511). Although Delblanc seeks

to perpetuate a narrative that strengthens a tradition of unity, Paris notes that his benevolent leadership marks a departure from the ideas they discussed on board the *Liverpool Merchant*. Leading up to Wilson's execution, Paris describes Delblanc as "a man transformed […] The years of vague theory, half-ironic rhetoric, generous, egalitarian sympathy, came together in this focus of fierce clarity. More than he wanted anything in his life, he wanted this desperate experiment to succeed" (517). Delblanc justifies the execution of Wilson and the slavers as "providential – they are mixed white and black, just as we are. By killing them we cancel the distinction. It is the only way … It is the only thing that will keep us together" (518). At this moment, Paris recognizes a shift in Delblanc's plan for an ideal multiracial community. According to Lambert, "in this particular case [Delblanc's remark] is a significant step toward taking race out of the equation and strengthening group cohesion" (Lambert 122). Lambert points to a fundamental problem in Delblanc and Paris' mission; in order to consolidate a community centred around equality, they must subtract race, despite its violent and tense history in the community. As the novel shows, removing race from the equation is only ever a possibility for the white members of the community. Later in the story, Paris concludes that his and Delblanc's utopia is "a notion of Eden, a nostalgia of educated, privileged men" (541). Delblanc sees the creation of the community as an opportunity for a social experiment rather than a necessity, insofar as he funds his own passage on the *Liverpool Merchant*. The same applies to the current multiracial societies in which post-racial ideology has become attractive. It is convenient for white members of these societies to latch onto the idea of post-race as it satisfies the need to remove race for the equation.

Delblanc's privileged perspective is also evidenced in his name, which implies that there is an inherent whiteness to his ideology. This is especially evinced through the black members of

the community, who serve as reminders that the conception of this community and its foundations were not mutually agreed upon. For instance, Kireku and the other black members of the community recognize the original sin of the community, which can never be undone. Kireku does not abide by the proto-communist idea of shared property among community members. Instead, he builds another hut on the outskirts of the enclave that he uses for business with indigenous populations. Kireku's ambition for self-gain goes directly against the principles promoted by both Delblanc and Paris. Nadri, the man with whom Paris shares a sexual partner, criticizes Paris for his tendency to impose his views onto others. Nadri tells Paris: "You say an attempt understanding but it is only an attempt proving your ideas the right ones. First you bringed us, say we are free, then you want to make us serve some idea in your head. But the people cannot serve your idea, you cannot make them do that" (Unsworth 563). Rather than proposing racial and economic equality as something to be decided on democratically, Delblanc and Paris enforce it without the consent of the rest of the community. Although Paris and Delblanc's mission is to create a utopian community, by doing so they bar the rest of the community from self-determination. Greg Forter notes that "[m]any of the settlement's founding acts are formalized before they even take place, planned in advance and communally enacted as binding plots," which in a sense reduces the rest of the members of the community, mostly comprised of former slaves, to mere pawns in a social experiment (Forter 805). This tension between the desire for self-determination and enforced equality speaks to the many problems with the development of communities. In staging this problem, the novel also adds nuance to conceptions of a multiracial society in a way that post-race rhetoric does not.

A Community of Individuals

Though Delblanc and Paris are partly successful in their goal of creating a multiracial utopia, the very creation of the community is executed in an unequitable and exclusionary fashion because it excludes the ideologies and desires of its African members. Robert Esposito describes the etymology of the Latin word *communitas* as

> the totality of persons united not by a 'property' but precisely by an obligation or a debt; not by an 'addition' [piii] but by a 'subtraction' \meno\: by a lack, a limit that is configured as an onus, or even as a defective modality for him who is 'affected,' unlike for him who is instead 'exempt' [esente] or 'exempted.'(Esposito 6)

Paris and Delblanc envision a society centred around a sense of affective and social debt to the community through communal parenting, decision-making through palavers, and sharing sexual partners. In this sense, Delblanc's imperative to establish a communal philosophy via the expulsion of pro-slavery members of the community is in line with Esposito's definition. However, while Delblanc believes that the multiracial community would rally around a common ethical belief, this is not the case, especially with regards to the prominent Africans living in the enclave.

Esposito's etymological explanation of community applies to the enclave insofar as it is built around a common social debt to respect the freedom of all its members. Raphael Lambert argues that "a more revealing way of probing the workings of Delblanc's 'infant republic' is to compare it to the social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau" (Lambert 122). Delblanc desires to "to test his theories, vindicate man's natural goodness in this dream of a community living without constraint of government or corruption or money" (Unsworth 536). In

this sense, Unsworth uses Delblanc in order to imagine how Enlightenment philosophers might have applied their ideas to a community "in nature," given the chance. It is fitting, then, that the community is located on the opposite side of the Atlantic, as the government in post-revolutionary United States borrowed the ideas of Hobbes and Locke when constructing the republic. Lambert summarizes one of Hobbes' arguments: "men had better live under the authority of a sovereign who guarantees their protection and saves them from the state of nature in which there is no liberty whatsoever" (122). This summary sheds light on the philosophical question that Unsworth poses in staging this scene: is it possible to construct an egalitarian society if the ideas of the few are applied to the many? Although Delblanc and Paris do not qualify as Machiavellian leaders, they exhibit a degree of benevolent leadership rather than following an imperative to construct a society founded on democracy. In this sense, the enclave more closely resembles a Platonic republic, which does not exclude oligarchy and wise rulers. In fact, because the community is founded on Enlightenment values, the community sometimes plays out the narrative of colonialism despite its effort to construct a multiracial utopia. Hobbes' description of a "state of nature," where "the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" resembles the description that his contemporaries gave about life in British colonies (quoted in Lambert 122). The irony of the enclave is that it imposes Western values on former slaves. Unsworth uses the colony to comment on the continuity between these former values and the contemporary moment. In both the novel's temporal setting and the late twentieth century, there is a concerted push to erase the category of race, despite the material effects it continues to have on people.

While much of the analysis of community in the novel occurs on a macro scale, Unsworth explores interpersonal relationships in *Sacred Hunger* to reveal the inherent challenges

that humans face in striving toward social equality. In addition to reflecting on race, the novel meditates on the power dynamics of other social relationships, such as parents' protection of their children or the intimacy between lovers, in order to analyse different forms of struggle for power. The enclave, in this sense, is not only an example of an early multiracial community, but a case study for non-Western social practices. For example, in the early days of the enclave, Hughes, a former crewmember on the slave ship, desires the immediate attention of his lover, Lamba. However, "[This] violated established rules of sexual behaviour, which were founded on the woman's consent, and reflected on the dignity of the man he shared Lamba with" (Unsworth 500). The norms of the community diverges from customs in England. This is exemplified in Erasmus Kemp's narrative, where there is a focus on his courtship of Sarah Wolpert back in Liverpool. This courtship epitomizes how gender inequality compares to class and racial inequality in the novel. While the existence of polyamory in the enclave speaks to its progressiveness, it also outlines a struggle for the white members of the community to adjust their pre-existing norms. This difficulty is explored in a subsequent passage:

> habit is a skin that can grow over any shape and they had reached a kind of understanding over the years. Hughes could not be brought to any concept of the mutual rights involved in sharing: but he was granted some latitude as a special case. It was never forgotten that he had once by his vigilance, saved the settlement. (500)

The exception sets a dangerous precedent, particularly due to Hughes' previous complicity in the slave trade. The metaphor for habit as a skin in this passage also makes the connection between the material fact of skin colour and habit. In this sense, the story of Wilson takes on a different meaning. Habits can change people over time, but it is also difficult to break a habit. Unsworth stages one of the complex difficulties in multiracial societies, which is that new habits must be

enforced and that old habits must be broken.

Unsworth focuses on Matthew Paris' relationship with his mixed-race child, Kenka, to demonstrate the difficulties and adjustments that white Europeans face when attempting to relinquish their power in multiracial societies. The relationship is an example of how intimate relationships are affected by race. It is never "Declared between him and the boy" that Paris is his father (Unsworth 524). It is customary in the community for children to live with their mothers and for the men to take responsibility for every child, regardless of biological relation. However, "it happened sometimes that men took a particular interest in those they knew for their own" (524). These two contradictory points – that Paris desires an intimate relationship with his son but does not claim him as his own – reflect the difficulty to abide by the rules of an ideal society or to break a habit of posterity. The distance between Paris and Kenka also calls into question whether or not it is possible for these norms to be sustainable. This relationship is analysed in a conversation between Kenka and Paris, which begins with Paris explaining how a plant had choked and killed an oak tree over many years. During his explanation, Paris perceives that "this had become a different story from the one he had set out to tell" (527). He qualifies what he said: "Man ken climb an' live in de sunshine tagedder" (527). Kenka, having already taken a cynical turn, concludes that "One tree choke anadder […] Den anadder chok dat one. In de finish dem all fall down" (527). As a mixed-race child, Kenka's bleak assessment of the future of the enclave is symbolic because he is an embodiment of the community's principles. In this sense, Kenka resembles the face on the cover of the special edition of *Time*, which heralds mixed-race people as the future of a post-racial society. Kenka's conclusion indicates an understanding that in any community, there must be one culture that dominates and eventually erases or integrates the others. Kenka concludes by saying that after the process of the trees

overtaking one another, “Anadder seed come on de wind,” which Paris refuses to acknowledge. Through Kenka’s observation that this process is cyclical, Unsworth comments on the inherent issues of multiracial community-building through the nature metaphor. The metaphor holds true in present-day multiracial societies, which tend to assimilate non-Western and nonwhite communities and cultures.

Ideological Incongruities

The emergence of post-race ideology has been polarized by W.J.T. Mitchell and Kwame Anthony Appiah. Mitchell claims that, in the current moment,

> on every side we hear declarations about the obsolescence of the very idea of race, while the symptoms of what can only be called racism seem, albeit under a veil of disavowal, to be as durable as ever. Everyone knows, in other words, that we are supposed to be in a post-racial moment, at the same time that they know in their hearts that racism is alive and well. (10)

Mitchell stresses the importance of the materiality of race and the many ways that racial violence manifests in British society. For this reason, he offers a rebuttal to Appiah’s claim that there are no races: “I want to argue that race is both an illusion and a reality that resists critical demolition or replacement by other terms such as ethnicity, nationality, civilization, or culture” (Mitchell 14). Mitchell problematizes Appiah’s claims by affirming that race is at once a social construct and a fundamental part of human identity. This duality demonstrates the difficulty of displacing the concept of race, because it is imprecise and overdetermined at the same time. These

competing philosophies map on almost seamlessly to the predicament that the community faces in *Sacred Hunger*.

For instance, Paris and Delblanc, who are guided by teachings of Enlightenment philosophy, use reasoning to remove race as a category of difference between the members of the community. Paris' realization on the slave ship that "[The African slaves] are of different races and tongues and reach the ship by diverse routes" would suggest that the slaves cannot merely be identified using the reductive term "black." Instead, Paris' observation implies instead, that the cultural and ethnic divisions among the slaves resist the umbrella-term logic of race. Appiah's efforts to disprove the existence of race as a scientific fact, while intended to obviate racist arguments, does similar work of arguing against definite racial categories. Appiah's and Paris' ideas surrounding race unearth the particularity of experience rather than drifting toward a universalizing vision of the world. Appiah's affirmation that there are no races can also be damaging in light of the material ways in which race determines who is subjected to violence and who is not. In *Sacred Hunger*, the logic used by Appiah is employed by Delblanc and Paris, who organize a community without the direct input of the African population. This division between organizer and organized falls along racial lines which, despite Appiah's argument, reaffirms race as a category.

By contrast, Mitchell contends that race is both an illusion and a reality that is impervious to critical disproval. His ideology acknowledges both the imagined aspects and the material consequences of race. This stance is also taken by Unsworth, who uses the historical setting of *Sacred Hunger* to dramatize current conversations surrounding race. Rather than argue for or against the material existence of race, Unsworth chooses to stage these issues and explore possible problems and solutions. Unsworth, like Mitchell, is not interested in debating whether

race as an identity category is obsolete or not. Instead, Mitchell thinks of race as a medium that "relieves us of the necessity of a decision between these alternatives, allowing us to understand the racial medium as (like any other medium) a vehicle for both fantasy and reality" (Mitchell 14). *Sacred Hunger* accomplishes exactly this, as Unsworth stages the multiracial community in a way that permits him to critique the relationships along social, personal, and economic lines. For both Mitchell and Unsworth, the politics of post-race are questionable. While contending with the idea that the removal of race as a concept facilitates a critical engagement with the origin and consequences of racism, Mitchell asks: "But who exactly is freed by the post-racial discourse and the abandonment of race as a concept?" (Mitchell 15). Unsworth offers a rejoinder to this question by mapping out how the multiracial society constructed by Paris and Delblanc serves a cathartic purpose, insofar as it purges them of guilt over slavery.

Additionally, Unsworth employs the historical novel as a tool to identify the relationship between the emergent discussion of post-race in contemporary social discourse. In an interview conducted in the year that he published *Sacred Hunger*, "Unsworth set out explicit connections between the Thatcher years and the slave trade era: 'As I wrote I began to see more strongly that there were inescapable analogies. You couldn't really live through the '80s without feeling how crass and distasteful some of the economic doctrines were. The slave trade is a perfect model for that kind of total devotion to the profit motive without reckoning the human consequences'" (Dorman qtd in Lambert 127). Through Unsworth's response, it can be deduced that the historical novel comments on contemporary social issues. Moreover, the historical novel documents the origins of both racism and capitalism, the progenitors of post-race discourse. The novel tells the story in a way that exposes the entwinement of race and capital. As a result, Unsworth is both critical and suspicious of rhetoric that discusses the end of racism, as it

necessarily implies the end of capitalism. Mitchell reflects on a quote from Marxist sociologist Robert Miles, in which Miles argues that adopting a post-race lens allows him to study racism "within the historical matrix . . . of the capitalist mode of production" (quoted in Mitchell 15). While Mitchell understands that for both Miles and Appiah this turn is purely for intellectual emancipation and not a belief that race does not have any real effects in the world, he is still concerned with the fact that "our fellow citizens, not to mention our government and laws, continue to behave as if race still matters" (15). *Sacred Hunger* exemplifies the tension between Mitchell and Miles. Instead of removing race from the equation in order to study the mode of production and the origins of racism, Unsworth chooses slavery, perhaps the most overt manifestation of racism, as a point of departure for the study of the material history of race. Unsworth, who is known for extensive research and historical accuracy in writing his fiction, pays close attention to the details of the slave trade throughout the novel. Paris documents the atrocities he observes onboard the *Liverpool Merchant*. The recordings in his journal act as historical materialist documentation of the origins of racism and capitalism. Contrary to Miles' argument that race hinders the study of the origins of slavery, race relations become the medium through which Unsworth is able to represent the nuances of multicultural societies. The novel itself therefore acts as a document that employs race as a medium from which to analyse the effects of racism, instead of wrenching it from its context.

The goal for Mitchell, however, is not to prove or disprove the material existence of race. He uses Lacan's semiotic registers of the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real in order to reroute the discussion to the materiality of racism. To do this, he adds a fourth register, "Reality," to the Lacanian scheme: "Race in this framework emerges as a reality that is constructed out of the Symbolic and the Imaginary—that is, out of words and images, the

sayable and the seeable, discourse and concrete things" (16). In Mitchell's assessment, race is neither an imagined concept, as Appiah argues, nor is it a scientific fact. Instead, Mitchell contends that:

> Race, then, is most emphatically not in the position of what Lacan called "the Real"; it is rather a matter of constructed, mediated, represented "reality"—visible, audible, and legible. […] The Real […] is the location not of race but of *racism.* Racism is what hurts. It is the disease, possibly an autoimmune disorder and certainly an infectious malady. […] In saying this, I follow the brilliant intuition of Jean-Paul Sartre in arguing that anti-Semitism (and racism in general) "is something quite other than an idea. It is first of all a passion" (17).

Mitchell's argument that the issue should not be with race itself but with racism demonstrates why it is problematic to characterize any society as post-racial. While race is a social construct, racism inflicts violence on people in a tangible way. The multiracial enclave in *Sacred Hunger*, though it managed to survive under relatively stable conditions for twelve years, still had lingering racial problems despite efforts by Paris and Delblanc to eliminate racial difference. The same can be said about the cultures in which post-race discourse emerges. Britain and its former colonies are amid an ongoing process in which the trauma of slavery and colonialism are still felt in social, cultural, economic, and affective ways. While these traumas may take more insidious forms than in the pre-abolition era of *Sacred Hunger*, in Mitchell's view, they are still most tangible in racism, not in race.

A Slaver's Legacy

In *Sacred Hunger*, the most poignant criticism of racism and capitalism is focalized in Erasmus Kemp. While the story of Paris accounts for one half of the novel, Kemp embodies the greed and individualism of the era in the other half. For the majority of the narrative Paris is away from Britain, but Kemp's portion of the novel takes place almost entirely in Liverpool, until he discovers the existence of the enclave in Florida. The chapters centred around Kemp focus on his thirst for power, the "sacred hunger," that was characteristic of the capitalist, slavery-driven economy in Liverpool at the time. By characterizing Kemp in this way, Unsworth attaches a face to the emergent era of racist economic exploitation. While Kemp and his father, William, are charting the ship's progress on a map, the narrator notes that

> it would have been difficult for these two to form any true picture of the ship's circumstances or the nature of the trading on the Guinea Coast, even if they had been inclined to try. Difficult, and in any case superfluous. To function efficiently—to function at all—we must concentrate our effects. Picturing things is bad for business, it is undynamic. It can choke the mind with horror if persisted in. (Unsworth 353)

In this passage, Unsworth stages the very moment of "taking race out of the equation" in the multiracial enclave, to use Lambert's formulation. Commenting on this passage, Greg Forter acknowledges that "Erasmus and his father view the world through a fictional device—the map—that abstracts and obscures the human consequences of their actions" (Forter 784). The passage is one example of many where Unsworth characterizes Kemp as a person who willfully obscures the human consequences of his actions for his own personal gain. Kemp's character

therefore can be read as an anticipator of post-race discourse, which also emblematizes a decision to obscure the consequences of racism.

Throughout the novel, the reader is given insight into Kemp's psyche, which marks him as an early symptom of modern racism and capitalism and therefore an ancestor of post-race ideology. Peggy Knapp affirms that "Kemp's proclivities and circumstances are scrutinized with subtlety and detail, and yet he seems almost a prototype for the massive entrepreneurial energies of his time and place" (Knapp 323). Unsworth offers a psychological explanation about why Kemp has grown into a man thirsty for dominance with a complete disregard for the wellbeing of others: a traumatic childhood experience that involved his cousin, Matthew Paris. When they meet again, Kemp recalls that "On their last meeting Paris had lifted him, helpless and raging, away from a dam he had been trying to build against the sea, lifted him clear and swung him and set him down yards away" (Unsworth 19). Though the episode occurred thirteen years prior, the recollection elicits a visceral reaction in Kemp: "Erasmus felt a slight prickling sensation at the nape of his neck […] The mortal offence of it, the violation of his body and his will, were as vivid now to his mind […]" (19). This moment, which is meant to recall the forced migration of millions of Africans during the slave trade era, appears to instil in Erasmus an impetus never to allow himself to be subjugated in any matter, certainly not physically. Kemp's sensitivity to the indignity that comes from the inability to control his body should make him sensitive of the inherent violence of the slave trade, yet he never comes to this realization. Instead, his trauma only hardens him and strengthens his desire to dominate and possess others.

Unsworth makes a parallel between intimate relationships in Kemp's life and the intimate relationships in the multiracial enclave. Through Kemp's courtship of Sarah Wolpert, Unsworth critiques the politics of global capitalism and its relationship with post-race discourse. The

courtship begins when Wolpert asks him to fill the role of Ferdinand in a production of *The Enchanted Island*, John Dryden and William Davenant's eighteenth-century rewriting of *The Tempest*. During this period, Kemp becomes jealous of another man who receives attention from Wolpert, Bulstrode. Eventually, Kemp sabotages Bulstrode, which in turn ruins the entire production. Although this upsets Wolpert, Kemp is persistent and obsessive; eventually Wolpert agrees to marry him.

Throughout his courtship of Wolpert, Kemp becomes more and more controlling. While discussing a painting in Wolpert's home, Kemp, who wants to dominate, "was happiest when he could take her experience and reinterpret it for her" (Unsworth 221). This occurs after Wolpert calls the painting, a scene in which Lords and Ladies stroll through orchards, along with their servants, "a picture of people in paradise" (222). Kemp, perplexed by this comment, attempts to refute her interpretation of the painting: "You must always have known it was really just a picture of people walking about in a garden, but you made up a story about them. I tell you, Sarah, I know you better than you know yourself" (223). The scene is an example of Kemp's "need to possess the present," which Unsworth alludes to throughout the novel. The narrator explains that:

> The future he thus envisaged was a palace of marble and Sarah was queen of it, enclosed within, securely his own. About the present he could never feel this confidence. The present was curiously porous, it had no containment, things leaked away from him in all directions. (Unsworth 221).

Kemp's desire to control others, despite the extreme discomfort it brought him when he lost control of his own body as a young boy, is linked closely to the unpredictability of the present. It appears to Kemp that he has control over the future because of its intangibility. By contrast, he

thinks that the present is fluid and impossible to control. This desire for control is also reflected in the enclave. The community will only be Utopian in principle, because the unpredictability of human interactions stops it from actualizing in practice. This applies to current multiracial societies as well: theorists can propose ideas about the intangibility of race, but this will necessarily diverge from the lived experiences of non-Western, non-white subjects.

Kemp's need to possess, compounded with his inability to acknowledge the suffering of others, is also a meditation on many of the overarching ideas in the novel, such as utopia. For Peggy Knapp, this scene reveals how "*Sacred Hunger* is connected more specifically with the utopian impulse through its insistent references to art and its social meanings" (Knapp 325). The scene mirrors another section of the novel: when Paris and Delblanc first meet at the British colonial outpost in West Africa. Delblanc shows Paris a portrait he painted of the outpost's governor. As he unveils the portrait, he tells Paris: "For eighteen months now I have been painting likenesses of company officials and agents and resident merchants […] And now I have come upon their collective face" (Unsworth 327-328). Paris describes the painting of the governor as "remarkable: the artist had perfectly caught the highbridged, disdainful nose, the languid eyelids; but the eyes were fixed, the bloodless mouth frozen in avarice and the whole face stark with ultimate composure. It was a mask of death that looked at him" (Unsworth 326). Paris is chilled by what he sees, but he cannot quite put his finger on exactly why he feels this way. Readers can deduce that this "collective face" is an embodiment of the emergent class of global capitalists who, like Erasmus Kemp, make their fortune through colonial exploitation and slavery.

Unsworth is interested in people's capacity to interpret works of fiction, and how those who fail to interpret often uphold regimes of power. Greg Forter points out that Unsworth has

long been concerned with "the relations between art and power or, more precisely, between the fictions through which regimes of power perpetuate themselves and the power of fiction to expose and help us resist those regimes" (Forter 778). Just as Erasmus Kemp cannot understand the inhumanity of the slave trade, he is also incapable of interpreting works of art. Instead of engaging with Sarah Wolpert's interpretation of the "paradise" painting, he is only concerned with the value of the painting and can only interpret the painting literally. If we consider Forter's claim that art can be used to perpetuate regimes of power but can also expose those regimes of power, then Kemp does not possess the interpretive capacity to recognize his impulse for power and control. Interpretation often asks the observer to imagine different perspectives and consider other points of view, which Kemp cannot do. His reality is uniform as he is only concerned about himself and how things make him feel. Kemp's worldview requires a homogeneous, like-minded community, as he shows through his desire to control everything. This way of thinking then, resembles post-race discourse, which attempts to remove race in order, as proponents claim, to combat racism. The removal of race from a community, however, leads to homogeneity, if not cultural assimilation.

Sacred Hunger yokes the fantasy of utopia and the reality of slavery to unearth a fundamental contradiction in modern society. Post-race ideology contends that multiculturalism will solve the problem of racism and racial inequality. In the novel, Unsworth exposes the ahistorical nature of this claim by connecting the legacy of slavery to the racial inequality of late capitalism. Greg Forter explains how "The novel seeks nothing less than to trace the exploitative economic system that alone explains the Atlantic slave trade and the global ambitions of Western modernity" (Forter 784). However, while the novel does rigorous work to represent the history of Western modernity, it does not arrive at a conclusion. Knapp notes that the exploration of utopia

in the novel “spurs further thought rather than authorizing conclusive beliefs” (Knapp 337). By staging complex social issues that have confounded people for centuries, such as the construction of racially and economically egalitarian societies, the novel asks readers to nuance and particularize their understanding of the complex power dynamics in multiracial societies. While the stories of Kemp and Paris show the danger and failure in attempting to reduce and simplify these issues, both through inhumane cruelty and through imperfect utopianism, *Sacred Hunger* does not offer a prescriptive solution. Instead, it calls for a broader understanding of racism and capitalism that makes space for experience, contrary to the oversimplifying and reductionist rhetoric of post-race.

Conclusion

My analysis of Smith's, Phillips', and Unsworth's works reveals similarities among their representations of the conditions of racial inequality in late twentieth and early twenty-first century Britain. The authors employ a material-historical approach in each of their works, insofar as they use historical contexts, facts, and genealogy to trace the material developments of systemic racism. They show through this historical mode, as well as their aesthetic and conceptual language of hybridity, that Britain's colonial history, which in the twentieth century led to an increase in the immigrant population, has generated a culture of exclusionism and bias in relation to nonwhite Britons. This is despite the promise of post-race theory and praxis, which contends that multicultural assimilation will bring together the nation's racial and ethnic groups. The authors express suspicion about the feasibility of this theory, and they are critical of white liberals who validate the false-consciousness of post-race theory. In response to this theory, the novels aim to document the actual conditions in contemporary Britain, emphasizing the fraught history of racial inequality in the UK that overshadows race relations.

The three novelists are critical of the systemic racism present in the UK, but they do not propose concrete solutions to dismantle it. Instead, they expose forms of racism by documenting the specific historical processes that produce racial inequality. *White Teeth* shows how the presence of multiculturalism can obfuscate and therefore deepen racial inequality; *Foreigners* recovers the history of black Britons and critiques how the British state has unjustly put their subjecthood into question; *Sacred Hunger* uses historical analogy to imagine how an egalitarian multiracial society can be constructed after the atrocities of slavery and colonialism. These models do not propose a theory to counter post-race theory, because theory cannot account for the lived experience of nonwhite Britons. Instead, the novels emphasize praxis by critiquing

insidious forms of racism, such as micro-aggressions. Occasionally they resort to humour and irony. This technique places the onus on readers to interrogate their own complicity in systemic racism and, in turn, allows them to imagine how they might begin to create new forms of racial coexistence. Another way the novelists encourage their readers to imagine emergent forms of social relations is through their refusal to write determinate conclusions. In *Sacred Hunger*, the enclave is on the verge of failure when Kemp finds it, reclaims the slaves, and arrests the British crew. In *Foreigners*, each portion of the novel ends in death, which are brought on, at least in part, by injustice and systemic racism. *White Teeth* is reluctant to have a proper ending at all; however, each possible ending offered by Smith is imperfect and does not feature a post-racial, utopian future. Instead, she writes a "game show" ending to demonstrate the arbitrariness of neoliberal values such as law, justice, and meritocracy. In each conclusion, the authors make clear that forms of racial oppression continue to exist in Britain.

Although the novelists depict moments of racial harmony, these moments are always disrupted and overshadowed by racism. In this sense, the novels predict the continued tensions between whites and nonwhites in Britain, particularly after the bombing in London on 7 July 2005. The emergent forms of racial tensions represented in the novels have become dominant in the recent decade; the rise of populism in Europe has further invigorated white nationalist ideologies. This is evident in the circulation of xenophobic rhetoric, which has become increasingly normalized in public life. Now more than ever, the racialized immigrant has become wrongfully associated with the threat of violence and cultural dissent. Instead of bringing on the end racism, the post-racial model of multiculturalism adopted by the British state and British society has exposed nonwhite Britons to forms of racial violence. The novelists I have studied

for this thesis are critical of white liberalism because their racism is so insidious that it becomes difficult to prove that it exists at an institutional level.

The state of British race relations in the 2010s has left theorists in a state of uncertainty about how the rise in populism will be combated. Christophe Bertossi argues that European countries such as the UK have yet to develop a multicultural model that is able to "integrate immigration and diversity into collective national narratives of common belonging" (244). He notes that, "ten to fifteen years ago, this book would have discussed the EU as a laboratory for the invention of a post-national and multicultural form of common belonging and citizenship" (244). This model of multiculturalism, however, failed to accommodate the new politics of migrants' integration, favoring instead the politics of nationalism, which often excludes nonwhite groups. Bertossi concludes: "Nation-states have indisputably 'won' (temporarily) this battle: nationalism and national identity are the key frames in which multiculturalism is being discussed, disputed and challenged today" (245). The three novels explored in this thesis are predictive of the flaws in the model that have become evident in the 2010s. As Bertossi points out, however, this recent rise of nationalism is temporary, and it is the responsibility of both the political and civil sectors of Britain to adjust their model of multiculturalism.

Overall, Unsworth, Smith, and Phillips are neither optimistic nor pessimistic about the future. Instead, their aim is to trace the historical development of racism in the UK. This is the role of the contemporary novel in the twenty-first century. Fredric Jameson, referring to Georg Lukács, calls the historical novel "a symptom and reflex of historical change" (285). He includes Lukács' observation that "it was no accident […] that the period which knew the emergence of historical thinking, of historicism in its peculiarly modern sense […] should also have witnessed […] the emergence of a narrative form peculiarly restructured to express that new consciousness

(285). Jameson uses the emergence of the historical novel genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to show that new forms of representation emerge to express novel ideas and social changes. This is why the novelists resist imagining post-racial utopias, because the language required to represent them does not yet exist. These novels cannot articulate actual futures. Instead, they trace histories to document progress, or lack thereof, over time. It is therefore the responsibility of British artists to criticize, historicize, and to gesture toward newer, more egalitarian worlds.

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