

**Whiteness as Currency: Colorism in Contemporary fiction of the
Anglophone Caribbean and the Cape**

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ABSTRACT

People of colour are often expected to meet externally determined standards of whiteness in exchange for privileges and benefits. The specific details regarding how those standards are determined vary based on context and depend on a variety of socio-historical factors. Regardless of the context, meeting these standards typically requires rejection of indigenous ways of being in favour of foreign ideals. Colorism, which is discrimination based on skin tone, plays a significant role in determining the success of attempts at assimilation because of the long history of preferential treatment associated with light skin throughout slavery and colonialism which persists today. This dissertation is an investigation of the complex interplay between race, colour, class and gender in contexts characterised by colorist hierarchies in the shadow of the British Empire. It focuses primarily on texts written by and about women and foregrounds gendered experiences of race in the Cape region of South Africa and Anglophone Caribbean, highlighting the unique experiences of women of colour in relation to colorism and intersectional class-based discrimination in post-colonial/apartheid spaces. I examine the cultural, social and psychological impact of the classist and colorist ideologies born out of the similar histories of colonialism, slavery and indentured servitude in the Anglophone Caribbean and South Africa, specifically through the lens of contemporary literature written by authors whose work displays a particular sensitivity to these intersections. I am especially interested in the paradoxical relationship between derision and desire that accompanies aspirations towards whiteness and appropriations of European and particularly British cultural norms for people of colour in these contexts. The persistence of this tension as a trope in post-colonial/apartheid spaces resists the narrative of progression suggested by the political rhetoric of multicultural unity espoused by the governments of South Africa and the Caribbean and the retrospective writing analysed in this project functions as a palimpsest belying the optimism of current times.

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Introduction

Whiteness as Performance

When it was announced in late November 2017 that Prince Harry, the person sixth in line to the British throne, would marry Megan Markle, an American divorcee with a black mother and white father, the unprecedented announcement caused significant controversy, both in the UK and abroad. Could it be true? Could black blood finally flow through the most revered, the “purest,” and “whitest” bloodline in the world?¹ This controversy highlighted the intersection of classism, racism and sexism, even as much of the uproar from conservative white Brits carefully avoided the thorny topic of race, focusing instead on Markle’s previous marriage, Catholic background, and non-British heritage as the basis for their judgment of her as unsuitable to join the royal family.² On the other hand, black and biracial women in the US and the UK expressed feelings of pride and validation at the prospect of “one of their own” gaining access to such a prestigious and exclusive club, a social phenomenon that has been termed the “Megan Effect” (Harris, 2018). In South Africa, some in the coloured community rejoiced at the thought of the crowning of the first official “coloured princess.”³

While there have been countless interpretations of this new twist in the centuries-old soap opera of British royalty, one of the most common ways of interpreting this new development is as an attempt to pull the antiquated monarchy into the future, a revitalisation of sorts to lend the outdated royal family relevance. However, though some have contended that the influence of the royal family has waned in recent years, the response to the wedding of Prince Harry and Megan Markle, who became the Duchess of Sussex as a result of their union, has proven that the

¹ The assumption of “pure whiteness” attached to the British royal family has been challenged, most recently by Maria De Valdes y Cocom, whose research indicates that Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George III, had North African ancestry (Waxman, 2018).

² The initial public sightings of Megan Markle and Prince Harry together resulted in an outpouring of racist and sexist vitriol from the media and bloggers, so much so that the royal family saw it necessary to make a public request for the media to cease from its most aggressive and discriminatory attacks (A Statement by the Communications Secretary to Prince Harry, 2016.)

³ The racial designation “coloured” has been socially constructed to have a particular meaning in South Africa (which will be expounded on later) and is at times conflated with the terms “mixed-race” and “biracial” as they are used in the US and UK.

persistent preoccupation with the lives of the royal family has maintained its hold on the global imagination. Some estimates indicate that up to two billion people watched the televised royal event worldwide, including more than a third of the British population, making it one of the most-watched televised events of the year (Fitzgerald, 2018). The rapt attention these royal events continue to receive (even from the most cynical among us) indicates that, despite murmurs of its diminishing influence, the long arm of empire continues to stretch perniciously into the future.

The public's response to Markle's African-American racial heritage and its supposed contradiction with her eloquence, education and poise also remind us that women of colour continue to bear the burden of centuries of stereotyping and intersectional racist and sexist discrimination. As black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) points out, the experiences of women of colour cannot be explained solely through the lens of either discourses of racism or sexism, but must be viewed as inhabiting the intersection between these two forms of discrimination, as Markle's case so clearly illustrates. As a woman of colour, Markle contends with (at least) these two forms of discrimination working to her disadvantage. The centuries of denigration of the black female body conspires against her. Her worthiness of the "honour" of marrying into the royal family ("despite" her racial heritage) must continually be proven by the way she performs her identity through the way she speaks, dresses and behaves.

Journalists have posited that Markle's race should be irrelevant, not because the concept of race is socially constructed and it has been proven that there is no biological or genetic basis for racial categorisation, but because, "Markle is an educated, accomplished, beautiful woman who's demonstrated the poise and discipline required to navigate the House of Windsor" (Kaufman, 2017). This comment is loaded with racist, sexist and classist sentiments – had Markle been physically unattractive (according to Western standards of beauty), uneducated, and either unable or unwilling to perform according to the standards of "poise" and "discipline" expected of royals, then these qualities (or lack thereof) would have been attributed to her racial heritage. Instead, she has distinguished herself as, at best, a credit to her race, and at the least, an exception. By "demonstrating" her worthiness, she has "earned" the right to transcend race and achieve the many benefits of whiteness that the royal family revels in.

Implicit in this logic is the unspoken myth that the benefits of white privilege can be attainable for people of colour if they are able to “play the game.” People of colour are expected, and often required, to meet externally determined standards of whiteness in exchange for privileges and benefits. The specific details regarding how those standards are determined vary based on context and depend on a variety of socio-historical factors. Regardless of the context, meeting these standards typically requires rejection of indigenous ways of being in favour of foreign ideals, which requires a constant self-monitoring to ensure maintenance of the performance. In Markle’s case, despite having “won the prize” of a royal husband, her ability to “perform” according to the standards set by and for the royal family is continuously scrutinised. Media outlets assess her performance constantly: “Is the former American actress adjusting well to the royal life of duty and public service? Has she worn the right clothes, said the right things, curtsied the right way during public engagements? Does she look happy and confident? Does *he* look happy and proud?” (Puente, 2018, emphasis in original). The emphasis on Markle’s ability to do and be “right”—the standard for which is based on Eurocentric notions of femininity—implies a suspicion that she has a tendency, perhaps even an inclination, to be “wrong.” Furthermore, it is not enough to expect her to be “right” constantly – she must do so with ease, maintaining the appearance of both happiness and confidence. Notably, the scrutiny to which Markle is subjected also emphasises her ability to *please* her husband, an expectation applied specifically to women and with additional weight for women of colour, who have historically been posited as excessively masculine and domineering in relationships (as compared to their white counterparts).

The significant amount of effort required to sustain Markle’s performance is not lost on onlookers; according to CNN royal contributor Victoria Arbiter, “[Markle is] incredibly smart and strategic in the approach she is following. She’s done her homework the way an actress does research for a role” (Puente, 2018). While a white woman of aristocratic ancestry would likely be seen as a natural fit for the role, Arbiter’s references to “strategy” and “research” reveal the perception that Markle’s suitability for the role of Duchess is unnatural, suggesting that she is conniving rather than conscientious. This is in line with the typical pathologisation of suspected attempts at the transgression of social and racial norms. In Markle’s case, her unlikely promotion

from biracial actress to Duchess transgresses both class and race norms, a double offense compounding the standard of expectations she must meet.

Markle's experience of becoming a Duchess can be read as a case study of attempts to either borrow or deploy what some scholars refer to as the "cultural grammar" or the "property" of whiteness in exchange for heightened social status (Mckaiser, 2018; Harris, 1993). Scholars have used various terms to describe the vast terrain of white privilege, which functions as a currency that can be exchanged for both social and material capital. For those who are not born into it, the pursuit of whiteness and its attendant benefits is a fraught, complicated and often lifelong journey, with seemingly little reward as compared to the extreme amount of sacrifice required. These attempts are typically met by a paradoxical combination of reward and ridicule by the larger society. This is because there is a significant pressure from people all along the colour spectrum to adhere to European standards of beauty, behaviour and traditions, but also to remain loyal to one's social and racial identity. The approximation of European cultural norms by people of colour is met with a complex blend of desire and derision, with some viewing women like Markle as a shining example of what can be achieved by adhering to European norms of appearance and culture, and others as a calculating sellout.

Many scholars within the field of postcolonial theory have addressed the challenges associated with this paradox, revealing the duplicitous nature of the promise of social and economic reward in exchange for compliance with the compulsion to assimilate. Frantz Fanon's writings are among the most renowned on this topic, as he presciently addressed the negative psychological consequences of colonialism on the black mind and soul (2008). Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* unpacks the performances of whiteness people of colour are coerced into adopting under the conditions of colonialism, and colonialism's qualified and often false promises of preferential treatment in exchange for assimilation (2008). Similarly, Alfred J. López theorises the desire for whiteness in postcolonial spaces as an inevitable consequence of the social engineering of the colonial project (2014). According to López, the compulsion to emulate whiteness "emerges as an indispensable component of a colonialism that would establish itself upon arrival as the universal standard of civilization, to which colonial subjects are compelled to aspire" (2014:95). Lopez identifies the design of colonialism, which was intended to undermine blackness, as the

root of the idealisation of whiteness and the compulsion to assimilate European cultural norms within previously colonised spaces.

The benefits of assimilation are meted out in relation to complex and culturally specific rating systems that take into account both behaviour and appearance, dispensing privilege more liberally to those who approximate whiteness physically. This privileging of light skin and European phenotype has come to be known as “colorism,”⁴ a term attributed to Alice Walker, who defines it as “prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color” (1983:290). Unlike more recent definitions that simplify the concept into “intra-racial discrimination based on skin colour,” Walker’s is broad enough to account for the fact that, as studies have shown, colorism occurs both inter- and intra-racially (Thompson & Keith, 2001:337). Because it is so closely related to the larger category of racism, colorism is often overlooked or absorbed into racism. However, Margaret Hunter (2005:247) helps to clarify the distinction between racism and colorism by explaining that

Systems of racial discrimination operate on at least two levels: race and skin color... People of color of all skin tones are subject to certain kinds of discrimination, denigration, and second-class citizenship, simply because they are members of an oppressed racial or ethnic group. Colorism, the second system of discrimination, operates at the level of skin tone.

Angela Harris takes this a step further by pointing out that “colorism and racism are not only not identical; hierarchies of color can destabilize hierarchies based on race” (2009:2). Colorism further complicates racism by introducing additional components that not only destabilise but also disrupt the value systems inherent in racism.

Colorism plays a significant role in responses to assimilation and adaptation because of the preferential treatment historically associated with light skin throughout slavery and colonialism.⁵

⁴ Though I will be using UK spelling throughout this dissertation, I have retained the US spelling of the words “colorism” and “colorist” because they are the most commonly used spellings of the terms (as in Alice Walker’s usage).

⁵ Notably, colorism is not limited to the African diaspora. According to research conducted by Peter Frost in his book *Fair Women, Dark Men: The Forgotten Roots of Color Prejudice*, a preference for and privileging of lighter skin has persisted in almost every culture of the world in all of recorded history, thereby proving that this topic is not only an important but an inexhaustible one, which has not yet been given its due in academic research (2005). However European colonialism and the resultant cultural dominance of European hegemonic ideology has made this preference especially potent in countries where colonialism and racial discrimination has been the dominant feature of recent history such as the United States, India and many countries in Africa.

This preferential treatment is complicated by the fact that lighter skinned people of colour are by no means “accepted” into whiteness (unless they are willing and able to make the controversial choice to “pass for white”), despite the benefits attached to their appearance. Colorism plays a role in Megan Markle’s reception by both the royal family and society at large because even though her mother is African American, Markle’s complexion is light enough to “pass for white,” making her appearance more appealing to those socialised to idealise whiteness. She is also ethnically ambiguous enough to lend the royal family the cultural cachet it needs to increase its relevance in the multicultural 21st century. Furthermore, her approximation of whiteness, in both appearance and cultural norms, make her the “ideal” multiracial subject for the role she has been chosen to fulfil.

The conversations orbiting around the marriage of Prince Harry and Megan Markle bring to the fore the ways that classism, colorism, racism and sexism intersect, especially in the shadow of British colonialism, Victorian notions of femininity and England’s history of slavery and imperialism. In this dissertation, my aim is to investigate this complex interplay between race, colour, class and gender in two contexts characterised by colorist hierarchies in the shadow of the British Empire. In doing so, I focus on the writing of women and foreground gendered experiences of race in the Cape⁶ and Anglophone Caribbean, highlighting the unique experiences of women of colour in relation to colorism and intersectional class-based discrimination in post-colonial/apartheid spaces. I examine the cultural, social and psychological impact of the interplay between classist and colorist ideologies born out of the similar histories of colonialism, slavery and indentured servitude in the Anglophone Caribbean and the Cape, specifically through the lens of contemporary literature written by authors whose work displays a particular sensitivity to these intersections. I am especially interested in the paradoxical relationship between derision and desire, what Francis Nyamnjoh calls, “the tensions between assimilation and adaptation” (2017:97), which accompanies aspirations towards whiteness and appropriations of European and particularly British cultural norms for people of colour in these contexts. The persistence of this tension as a trope in post-colonial/apartheid literature resists the narrative of progression

⁶ I use the term the Cape to refer to the region now known as the Western Cape of South Africa, which was known as both the Cape of Good Hope and the Cape Colony during colonialism. Though this region was formally incorporated into the larger Union of South Africa in 1910, the long and influential history of British colonialism in the Cape has distinguished it in many ways from other provinces in the country.

suggested by the political rhetoric of multicultural unity espoused by the post-colonial/apartheid governments of the Caribbean and South Africa, so I am also interested in the way the selected authors' retrospective writing functions as a palimpsest belying the optimism of current times.

Through this comparative analysis, I have the dual purpose of surfacing the overlaps that speak to greater resonances across post-colonial spaces, while also paying attention to the specificities and particularities of each context. A mindfulness of the differences alongside the parallels allows for a more holistic picture of the aftermath of the colonial project, which extends beyond the national boundaries imposed by colonialism. My intention is to examine the stylistic and ideological representations of characters of colour, paying particular attention to the language used to describe them and the interpersonal dynamics between characters of various skin tones and class positions. In so doing, I use the term "people of colour" to refer to groups of people who have been historically disadvantaged by colonial systems that privilege whiteness. Within this category lies the racial categories "black" and "coloured" in the South African context and "brown" in the Caribbean. The complexities of the language of race, which is one of the tools enabling its ongoing power, is also part of the larger focus of this project. I am interested in the ways in which colorist ideology and the terms it employs are interpellated and perpetuated intergenerationally in postcolonial pigmentocracies⁷ wherein "brown" and "coloured" are distinct from "black" on the continuum of blackness and particular class positions and privileges are associated with the different shades.

The juxtaposition of these contexts is especially relevant because, although both regions undoubtedly have their own unique histories, their formations are largely shaped by historical contexts impacted by similar colonial biopolitics and ideology. This, "comparative or, better, a contrapuntal perspective" allows me to unpack what Edward Said calls the, "massively knotted and complex histories of special but nevertheless overlapping and interconnected experiences" (1993:32). South Africa and the Anglophone Caribbean share a similar history of slavery and

⁷ Linda Laud and Hauwa Mahdi describe the term "pigmentocracy" thus: "By privileging lighter-skinned, mixed-race groups, colonialists established a hierarchy that linked skin colour to economic and social class. Pigmentocracies or shadeism (shadism) arose as a result of discrimination by white colonialists against other races and the valorization of lighter-skinned, mixed-race groups. Groups that gained political and economic power as a result of *métissage* maintained their dominant position by discrimination against others who are further down the skin colour scale" (2013:170).

British colonialism, which has resulted in comparable racial dynamics. This shared history as previous colonies of the British empire is important because, as Said points out, “In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; [but] imperialism, as we shall see, lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in political, ideological, economic, and social practices” (1993:32). This impact on the cultural sphere is especially evident through the cultural medium of literature. By shining a light on the protracted influence of colonialism and imperialism, I hope to destabilise their undeservedly secure positions in the cultural hierarchy and explode the imposed boundaries of the nation-state as a contribution to the larger project of decolonialism.

Colonial Resonances

Slavery, as practiced during the colonial era, depended on the creation of and strict adherence to racial categories in order to maintain the unequal power relations required for the enslavement of large populations. As Homi Bhabha points out, the creation of race and racism allowed for, “the difference of the object of discrimination [to be] at once visible and natural - color as the cultural/political *sign* of inferiority or degeneracy, skin as its natural ‘*identity*’” (1994:80; italics in original). Each of the imperial powers who set out to conquer and claim other nations since the 15th century developed their own particular brand of imperialism. While there are many aspects of the experiences of slavery and colonialism that are consistent internationally, regions colonised by the same imperial power have even more in common. South Africa and the Anglophone Caribbean are an example of this kind of striking similarity. Because of their shared colonial heritages and similar racial demographics, it can be argued that the prevailing hegemonic discourse of beauty that privileges white European standards of beauty over black African features has affected Caribbean and South African coloured subjects similarly. Both contexts can be described as pigmentocracies wherein skin colour holds tremendous value in terms of interpersonal relationships and access to opportunities in both the private and public domain.

In both the Caribbean and South Africa, East Indians and Asians, along with a sizable mixed-race or “mulatto” population, were viewed as “buffer races” between black and white and were

endowed with additional privilege and status. In South Africa, the racial designation “coloured” functions similarly. This term refers to a culturally, religiously, economically and phenotypically diverse grouping of people who were combined into one ethnic grouping during South Africa’s history of racial segregation and solidified by the apartheid regime for the purpose of classifying otherwise unclassified individuals. In the Caribbean, this group is referred to by different terms depending on the country but is often characterised as the “brown” or “red” minority. In her analysis of the social history of the Caribbean middle-class, Belinda Edmondson vacillates between the use of the word “coloured” and “brown” for the “not quite white, not quite black” group of people who have historically made up much of the middle-class in the Caribbean (2009:51). As Edmondson highlights, “brown people have always suggested a problem of cultural representation, a cultural “otherness”: were these “colored” white people, or were they black people with a desirable color?” (2009:51). Zimitri Erasmus (2000:381) also sheds light on the similarities between Caribbean systems of racialisation and South Africa’s by pointing out that

South Africa, like the Caribbean, has a history of differential racialization of black people’s bodies. This heritage has meant that whiteness and ‘degrees of whiteness’ have been regarded as the yardstick of beauty, morality and social status. These racial hierarchies and values of colonial racism have left a deep mark on our conceptions of beauty, defining beauty against blackness.

The resonances between the socio-cultural and racial dynamics in these two contexts are rarely put in conversation with each other. There is often a resistance to this kind of comparative work because of concerns that it will underplay or muddy the specificities of each context, but I contend that this kind of work contributes to the illumination of the uniqueness of each context, while allowing us a much needed bird’s eye view of the strategies and impact of the British imperial project.

Texts in Context

A literary comparison of the portrayal of colorist ideology in the literature of the Cape and the Caribbean has particularly interesting implications because despite the geographical distance and relatively low rates of immigration between the two places, writers from both contexts depict characters along the colour spectrum who express similar feelings of being trapped by their appearance and the class positioning it assigns them. In South African and Caribbean literature,

physical markers of race and origin such as skin tone, hair texture and nose shape (all of which are loaded with meaning) are among the most frequently noted features. Their plot arcs follow the methods various characters employ to negotiate this entrapment, which is further compounded by classism. Therefore, this comparative analysis provides unique insight into the parallels between a region of Africa and the African diaspora with comparable colonial heritages.

I rely on Caribbean social theory for my excavation of these issues from the Caribbean perspective, foregrounding the works of scholars who read the particular experiences of Caribbean nations in relation to each other. As G.R. Coulthard asserts, “Even the most cursory glance at the literature (and the painting, sculpture, music and dancing) of the Caribbean, in Spanish, French or English, reveals a constant concern [with]... race and color” (1962:5). In the decades following Coulthard’s writing this preoccupation has upheld; it is nearly impossible to find a work of literature or art produced in the Caribbean that is not related to issues of race and colour. Coulthard (1962:5) goes on to point out that

The countries of the Caribbean possess a high degree of historical homogeneity—colonization by European countries, extinction of the aboriginal peoples, importation of Negroes as slaves from Africa to replace the extinct Indians as a work force, cultivation of sugar and coffee, and finally independence or semi-independence.

Both Coulthard and Caribbean scholar Antonio Benitez-Rojo make a convincing argument for the fact that despite the cultural differences that vary between nation states, there are many similarities that uphold across the region (Coulthard, 1962; Benitez-Rojo, 1996). The Anglophone Caribbean in particular shares a common experience of British Colonialism that makes cross-national research of countries that share that heritage especially apt. Many of the Anglophone Caribbean islands also share a similar take on multiracial nationalism post-independence that reveals their anxieties around race in the context of post-colonialism. They espouse a commitment to equality and racial harmony that creates a very particular ethos of non-racialism that is later echoed in the South African concept of the “rainbow nation,” yet another attempt at social engineering to stymie racial tensions post-apartheid.

The similarity between the Caribbean’s different variations of multiculturalism and South Africa’s “rainbow nation” ethos is just one example of the many resonances between the two contexts as a result of their shared history of racial discrimination, slavery and colonialism and

their markedly similar racial demographics. Likewise, apartheid's rigid system of segregation has created a pigmentocracy that is incredibly similar to the system in the Caribbean. Louis Althusser's explanation of the functioning of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding how colorist ideology is interpellated through institutions not run by the state but which uphold the values of the state and the interests of the ruling class (2001/1970). The alternative, what Althusser calls Repressive State Ideologies (RSAs), are government-facilitated entities that enforce their hegemony through violence, while ISAs function primarily through ideology (2001/1970). ISAs can include but are not limited to religion, the education system, families, political parties and the media. Because of their existence within the private domain, ISAs play a more covert role in the transmission of ideology and can be just as effective and in some cases even more effective at instructing their subjects how to behave and what role they ought to play in the system as RSAs.

As in the contexts Althusser analyses, in South Africa and the Caribbean, family, community and the church (all of which are ISAs) play an important role in regulating social mobility and interpellating subjects into complying with the system and perpetuating it themselves. One notable difference is that South Africa's racist system of segregation was enforced by RSAs for longer, whereas the Caribbean's has been enforced primarily by ISAs in the post-emancipation era. Nonetheless, both societies have remained similarly colorist post-independence. The similar racial demographics and colonial legacies of South Africa and the Caribbean have resulted in particular manifestations of colorist ideology that remain under-researched but are nonetheless vital to our understanding of racial politics and identity formation in these contexts.

In my choice of South African texts, I focus particularly on the Cape because of the close ties between this region, slavery and British colonialism. The Cape region also has similar racial demographics to the Caribbean (largely owing again to the similar histories of slavery and indentured servitude). The Cape has a large population of people who were classified as coloured by the apartheid regime and continue to self-identify as such, and the main characters of the South African texts I analyse in this dissertation identify as coloured. Vivian Bickford-Smith points out that the term "coloured" was first used in the South African context in the early 1800s, not just as an imposed label but also a self-descriptor (2003). The term distinguishes mixed-race

people from blacks, allowing them to gain access to increased privilege and illustrates the way “shade of pigmentation closely correlated with historical and contemporary experience at the Cape” (2003:192). The diverse coloured population group is made of, “descendants from Black-White, Black-Asian, White-Asian, and Black-Coloured unions” as well as Malay, “Sunni Arab and European Muslims” as well as a variety of indigenous Southern African peoples (Brown, 2000:198). Coloured identity is complex and socially constructed, and contemporary South African race theory insists upon complicating an understanding of coloured identity that extends beyond “black + white = coloured.” That simplified explanation places coloured people in a liminal space between South Africa’s two dominant racial identities and ignores the many cultural, religious and ethnic varieties that are encompassed by the term (Erasmus, 2001).

Indigenous Khoi and San (which has now been combined as Khoisan) ancestry is the commonly accepted central feature of coloured identity and is therefore very important to the contemporary understanding of the group. While this Khoi heritage marks coloured people as quintessentially South African, it also bequeaths the group the legacies of society’s many negative stereotypes of indigenous people. Sarah Gertrude Millin’s *God’s Step Children*, a novel which was extremely popular when originally published, contributes to this negative portrayal through the depiction of “Hottentot Blood” as a contagion, tainting the bloodline and dooming the family she depicts for generations (1927:250). Zoe Wicomb cites Millin’s work as where “the shame-bearing coloured finds her literary origins” because of Millin’s derogatory portrayal (Wicomb, 1998:100). Association with the Khoisan tribe of South Africa also links the coloured population with the typical portrayals of indigenous peoples promulgated by travel writers and colonialists in the 19th and early 20th century. The colonial stereotype of the Khoi people depicted them as animalistic, savage, unintelligent “bushmen” or “hottentots.” As Christina Sharpe (2009:68) points out,

There is a long, established, and diverse history dating back several centuries in Europe, southern Africa, and elsewhere of constructing “Bushman” perceived racial difference and sexual difference as radically other, and then positioning those Bushmen as people to and with whom anything can be done materially and discursively. In much (white) South African writing the Bushman (KhoiSan), the mulatto, and the so-called coloured in apartheid’s racial nomenclature were each, individually and at times interchangeably, figures of monstrosity, their presence an indicator of national disease, and their bodies useful materials for the nation’s reconstructions of itself.

The prime example of this portrayal is the treatment of Sarah Baartman, a Khoi woman who was exhibited throughout Europe in the early 1800s and then dissected after her death. Baartman's voluptuous body, with its large buttocks and distended genitalia, was juxtaposed against the European standard of feminine beauty, depicted in the Venus de Milo, which accounts for the term she became known as: The Venus Hottentot (Lindfors, 1996). Baartman serves as the key example of the hyper-sexualisation and exoticisation of the African female form, and this portrayal reflects directly on South Africa's coloured female population in particular.

Many of the stereotypes associating the coloured population with the "native" have maintained, and the terms "bushmen" and "hottentots" are used disparagingly in reference to coloured people. Certain physical features that are associated with the Khoi and San phenotype have been used to place coloured people on the scale from whiteness to indigenous heritage. In literature written by and about coloured people, there are often references to "boesman korrels" (bushman curls), "kroeskop" [coarse hair] or "hotnot holle" [hotnot buttocks], all of which are designed to disparagingly indicate distance from the European standard of beauty (Adhikari, 2005:29). In her work on the politics of hair in the coloured community, Zimitri Erasmus (1997:12-13) states:

until recently, in most coloured communities 'good hair' meant sleek/straight hair...Kroes (coarse) hair, round buttocks, a round nose and thickish lips were not what the boys looked at or for. You had to have (naturally) straight hair (everybody knew the difference), flat buttocks, a sharp nose and thin lips. Often, not even straightened hair was good enough because of the shame it caused when it 'went home' in the rain or at the beach.

Erasmus's statement is important because it highlights the preeminence of the external gaze, and the *male* gaze in particular, in determining the value of coloured femininity and a woman's placement on the beauty hierarchy. This reveals the extent to which colorism is gendered, with its strictest requirements applying primarily to the female body. Erasmus also highlights the importance of "natural beauty," meaning an approximation of whiteness that does not appear false or contrived. Hair that has been chemically straightened is not naturally straight and therefore not "good enough"; both the desire for whiteness and the inability to achieve it are coded as shortcomings. Because class mobility and socioeconomic standing in South Africa has historically been bound by race, the approximation of traditionally white or European features, traditions and behaviour are seen as a way to access opportunity. Adhikari explains this as the reason for the assimilationism that characterises coloured identity, which is comprised of "a

striving for acknowledgement of the worth of coloured people as individuals and citizens and inclusion within the dominant society on the principle that it was ‘culture’ and ‘civilisation’ rather than colour that mattered” (Adhikari, 2006b:469). Accordingly, so-called “traditionally African” features such as dark skin, coarse hair, broad nose and hips and large lips and buttocks suggest an affiliation with blackness with negative connotations. Because these issues of appearance and assimilationism are such a significant part of coloured history and identity, these topics feature repeatedly in much of the literatures written by South African coloured authors.

Due to their similar colonial heritages, both South African and Caribbean literature share this preoccupation with physical markers of race and origin such as skin tone and hair. The hegemonic discourse of beauty that subjugates black African features in favour of a white European standard of beauty has infected the way of thinking of people from both backgrounds similarly. Anglophone Caribbean and South African coloured authors tackle this issue of inter- and intraracial discrimination in ways that provide valuable insight into how this form of discrimination impacts on self-image. In this study I have chosen to focus on fiction in particular, adopting Ato Quayson’s method of “calibrations: a form of close reading of literature with what lies beyond it as a way of understanding structures of transformation, process, and contradiction that inform both literature and society” (2003:1). Similar to Quayson, my intention in the use of contemporary literature is to “read *for* the social rather than *through* it,” viewing literature not as a mirror, but as a “variegated series of thresholds and levels, all of which determine the production of the social *as a dimension within the interaction of the constitutive thresholds of literary structure*” (2003:6; italics in original). Literature provides a contextual framework because the authors create worlds drawn from their own personal experience and imaginations and endow their characters with personalities and viewpoints that echo those held by the larger society. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2003:1) point out,

It is easy to see how important [colonialism] has been in the political and economic spheres, but its general influence on the perceptual frameworks of contemporary peoples is often less evident. Literature offers one of the most important ways in which these new perceptions are expressed and it is in their writing... that the day-to-day realities experienced by colonized peoples have been most powerfully encoded and so profoundly influential.

I have chosen to focus on contemporary literature written within the last thirty years because this allows me to observe the author’s portrayals in light of the post-independence/post-apartheid

dispensations and its accompanying reconfiguring of national identity. I will critique the portrayal of these locations in the period during which the framing of the nation state in its newest form is cemented, because authors writing in this time period have a unique vantage point from which to observe this pivotal moment and reflect in a critical and retrospective way on the independence era and the decades immediately following, a period with meaningful implications for the state of the nation today and in the years to come.

I am interested in surfacing how the texts portray the key aspects of identity that place subjects in the colorist hierarchy and what tactics and attributes are used in the texts as tools to negotiate the stringency of this hierarchy. I am also interested in the “lessons” readers can draw from the outcome of the strategies the characters employ and what the authors’ use of time and location reveal about the evolution or stasis of attitudes towards colour and class amongst the characters within each context. My reading is particularly attentive to language in the texts, both narration and dialogue, to reveal how the current social climate is portrayed relative to the past and determine what this reveals about the relationship between colorist ideology, families, extended communities, and the nation-state. In line with this focus on national and cultural belonging is my parallel interest in investigating the impact of the racial ideologies espoused by the governments in each region (both before and after apartheid and colonialism) on the manifestations of intersectional colorism and classism.

In order to address these questions and unearth the complicated and nuanced manifestations of colorism and class discrimination in the two contexts under discussion, I bring together novels and short stories written by Caribbean and South African authors, many of which were recently published and have yet to receive the critical readership they deserve. The South African texts include two of acclaimed author Zoe Wicomb’s most popular works, *Playing in the Light* (2006) and *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987). I also analyse two recently published novels, one by first time author Rehana Rossouw entitled *What Will People Say?* (2015) and *Joonie* by Rayda Jacobs (2011). The Caribbean texts include Zee Edgell’s well-known novel *Beka Lamb* (1982), and the lesser known *Dog-Heart* by Diana McCaulay (2010) and *The Same Earth* by Kei Miller (2008). I also include a short story by Colin Channer entitled “How to Beat a Child the

Right and Proper Way,” published in the anthology *Iron Balloons: Hit Fiction from Jamaica’s Calabash Writer’s Workshop* (Channer, 2006).

One of the challenges of writing about recently published texts (many of which were published within the last decade) and texts written from marginalised spaces is the dearth of critical research and attention they receive. Furthermore, many of the texts analysed in this dissertation have been characterised as “popular fiction,” a genre which is often considered to be less worthy of scholarly critique than so-called “literary fiction.” This dichotomy speaks to the hierarchies of value and the unequal distributions of power between so called “first” and “third” world countries, which reproduce themselves in the distinction between “literary” and “popular” fiction. Even the texts analysed in this dissertation that have received some scholarly attention have not received any in relation to their portrayal of colorism, as this subject too remains an underexplored topic, often side-lined in favour of a focus on racism more generally. Malinda Williams’s doctoral research on colorism in the Spanish Caribbean (2011) focuses on memoir and fiction written by authors from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, foregrounding the historical basis for colorism and the contemporary social construction of race impacting on the manifestation of colorism in these contexts. Aside from the obvious difference in context between this research and Williams’s, another key differential between this dissertation and Williams’ is her focus on immigrant identity and the relationship between the Spanish Caribbean conceptualisation of colorism in relation to America’s ‘one-drop rule’ of racialisation. Kathleen Koljian’s dissertation compares the representation of mixed-race characters in Caribbean and South African literature, positing the trope of the mixed-race character as a tool deployed by Caribbean and South African authors to destabilise colonial social hierarchies (2006). While our research shares a focus on racialised hierarchies of power, my research veers away from Koljian’s because of her emphasis on what she refers to as “the racially mixed character,” which is not the focus of my research. Rather than focusing on the deployment of an archetype, I am concerned with the impact of the system of colorism on the individual and the role of society in perpetuating it.

In my explication of South African fiction, including that of Zoe Wicomb, my primary interlocutor is Wicomb herself. Her writings on shame and identity, as well as interviews in

which she has expounded on her perspective on coloured identity and racial politics in South Africa provide a foundation for my understanding of her writing. I also rely on the work of Mohamed Adhikari and Zimitri Erasmus on coloured identity, as well as the analyses of Wicomb's work conducted by South African scholar and author Dorothy Driver. JU Jacobs' work on Wicomb's novels, especially Jacobs' exploration of the portrayal of coloured identity both during and post-apartheid in Wicomb's work, is also useful to my explication of Wicomb's writing (2008). Jacobs's examination of coloured identity in Wicomb's work illuminates the complicated tension in the texts between an understanding of colouredness as an unstable, complex discourse that resists essentialisms, and the yearning for a coherent, unified, essential identity. These scholars also undergird my explication of *What Will People Say?* (2015) and *Joonie* (2011) since these texts share similar ideological and socio-cultural contexts and concerns. Equally important to the sociological perspective provided by the scholars listed above is the historical context provided by Vivian Bickford-Smith (2003), Robert Ross (1999), Grant Farred (2000) and Diana Mafe (2013) whose works help to contextualise the impact of British Colonialism on racial identity in the South African context.

Woefully little scholarly, critical attention has been paid to the Caribbean texts I make use of, especially those published most recently. Edgell's *Beka Lamb* is regarded as one of the seminal texts of Belizean literature and has therefore received the most attention. Heather Smyth's work on *Beka Lamb* as a reworking of a traditional bildungsroman foregrounds the formulaic aspects of the text, also providing useful insight into the inner workings of the intergenerational transmission of colorist and classist ideology (2011). Smyth's work also pays close attention to the portrayal of the formation of national identity, a focus which informs my explication of post-colonial Caribbean national identity in relation to post-apartheid South Africa's national identity formation. In her writing on the relationship between colonialism, the Church, educational institutions and society at large with the individual, Lora Down provides useful insight into the ways in which the stories of the main characters reveal the complex tensions at work in post-colonial nations on the brink of independence and the impact of those complexities on the individual (1987). Simon Gikandi's (2018) analysis of Edgell's work is particularly useful, as it highlights the role women are written into in the literary construction of national identity in the

Caribbean and complements Belinda Edmondson's (1999) work on masculinity and the nation and the cultivation of leisure culture amongst the Caribbean middle-class (2009).

The growing field of scholarship on the trope of madness in women's writing provides fertile ground for the exploration of the portrayal of women in Caribbean and South African fiction, particularly in Edgell's *Beka Lamb* (1982) and Rayda Jacobs's *Joonie* (2011). Evelyn O'Callaghan's exposition of the treatment of the "mad woman" archetype in Caribbean fiction written by female authors provides a foundation from which to view the use of this trope in Caribbean fiction in particular and post-colonial fiction more generally, especially in terms of the manipulation of this trope to speak back to colonial portrayals of non-white femininity (1990). This work, along with Marta Caminero-Santangelo's work on madness in postcolonial women's literature, inform my approach to the portrayal of interracial romance and the transgression of racial boundaries in postcolonial literature (1998). Caminero-Santangelo rethinks the common Western feminist theoretical paradigm that posits the portrayal of madness as subversive by highlighting the powerlessness implicit in the silencing, invisibility and imprisonment of these characters. My interpretation of the portrayals in the texts I analyse aligns with Caminero-Santangelo's because of our shared attempt to surface the regulatory functions of the archetypal portrayals of women of colour, highlighting the ways in which societal rejection (such as alienation, diagnoses of insanity and exile) reinforces social boundaries.

Race as Practice

This research foregrounds race and specifically colorism as both distinct from and embedded within systems of racism. My intention is to discuss not only the institutional and systematic functions of racial discrimination, but also the interpersonal and intraracial manifestations of colour-based discrimination in pigmentocratic societies. I do this with the acknowledgement that although race is now generally accepted to be a socially constructed ideology and has long been abandoned as a finite biological reality, it is still very much a part of our lived experience (Fields & Fields, 2014). As Fields & Fields (2014:146) point out,

Race is neither biology nor an idea absorbed into biology by Lamarckian inheritance. It is ideology, and ideologies do not have lives of their own. Nor can they be handed down or

inherited: a doctrine can be, or a name, or a piece of property, but not an ideology. If race lives on today, it does not live on because we have inherited it from our forebears of the seventeenth century or the eighteenth or the nineteenth, but because we continue to create it today.

This perspective highlights the embeddedness of race in every day processes that continually reify this ideology. Though race is not “real,” it remains an unavoidable feature of social interaction. Phenotypical attributes such as the colour of one’s skin, facial features and hair texture are still used as markers of ethnic origin and continue to have considerable impact on how one is viewed and treated in society. As Margaret Hunter points out, “The cultural meanings now associated with skin tone and facial features are based on historical colonial ideologies about civility, modernity, sophistication, backwardness, beauty and virtue” (Hunter, 2013:248). Hunter uses the evidence of the ongoing prevalence of skin lightening and bleaching products in the mainstream cosmetics industry as evidence that there is an increasing interest in approximating white beauty in the global market. Hunter explains that due to “more permeable racial boundaries and increased opportunities for assimilation” in recent times, there is increased access and interest in accumulating racial capital through body and behaviour modification, making it “not unreasonable to suggest that skin tone is more important than ever” (Hunter, 2013:252, 254). Jemima Pierre makes a similar argument “for recognizing postcolonial African societies as structured through and by global White Supremacy” through her analysis of the persistence of the primacy of race amongst Ghana’s predominantly black population (2012:1).

These concerns are especially pertinent for women because of the associations between skin tone and beauty and the importance of beauty for women in patriarchal societies, the conceptualisation of which functions as a hegemonic ideology that serves the interest of both white privilege and patriarchy. Implicit in the focus on beauty for black women is the question of value relative to white bodies, which has been reified through the process of racialisation conducted throughout slavery and colonialism. Throughout this process, as Margaret Hunter points out earlier, the black body has been marked as inferior, associated with savagery, ignorance and ugliness, while the white body has been constructed as the ideal embodiment of civility, wisdom and beauty. As Jemima Pierre elaborates, “Whiteness is at once development, modernity, intelligence, innovation, technology, cultural and aesthetic superiority, and economic and political domination” (2012:74). Blackness is thus defined in opposition to this ideal. Since

the ideals of white Western culture “denote value in today’s world,” they also have the power to “dictate the terms of membership—humanity—in modern society” (Pierre, 2012:74). Because the question of one’s proximity to whiteness is closely linked to the perception of one’s humanity and value, to be found lacking in relation to the standard of whiteness is no small or irrelevant matter. Critical race theorist Cheryl Harris further elaborates by pointing out that historically, “becoming white meant gaining access to a whole set of public and private privileges that materially and permanently guaranteed basic subsistence needs and, therefore, survival” (1993:277). Under these conditions, approximating whiteness can increase “the possibility of controlling critical aspects of one’s life rather than being the object of others’ domination” (Harris, 1993:277). Employing tactics of assimilation in varying degrees, from appropriating white culture and values to the extremes of bleaching one’s skin or passing for white can be seen as attempts to negotiate the strict colorist hierarchy by which racialised bodies are bound. The ongoing practice of these strategies indicates that rather than diminishing in significance, “Whiteness is being more firmly entrenched into the global economic and cultural order” (Pierre, 2012:98). Therefore, the conversation around race and colorism cannot avoid the topic of whiteness—it in fact orbits around it. Whiteness studies is intrinsic to both this research and the larger project of unpacking the enduring legacies of colonialism and imperialism.

What we have now come to know as the field of “whiteness studies” is largely dominated by American studies scholars such as Richard Dyer (1997), David Roediger (1999), and Ruth Frankenberg (2009). Toni Morrison’s seminal text *Playing in the dark: Whiteness and the literary imagination*, in which Morrison illuminates the erasure of blackness from American literature and the propping up of whiteness on the literal and figurative backs of the black American population, is often credited with birthing the field (1992). Morrison exposes how African American characters, often not explicitly the focus of novels written by and about whites, are nonetheless critical to the construction of white identity in those texts. Richard Dyer refers to whiteness as a “passport to privilege” that allows white people the freedom to not have to focus on themselves in terms of the discourse of race and racialisation (Dyer, 1997:44). Whiteness is viewed as the norm, in relation to which all other identities are rendered different, other, or exotic. Much of race studies has thus focused on non-white groups rather than casting the analytical gaze back on whiteness. Dyer (2013:126) proposes that,

looking with such passion and single-mindedness at non-dominant groups has had the effect of reproducing the sense of the oddness, differentness, exceptionality of these groups, the feeling that they are departures from the norm. Meanwhile the norm has carried on as if it is the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human.

In this, Dyer's argument is in line with Hazel Carby's that we should, "make visible what is rendered invisible when viewed as the normative state of existence: the (white) point in space from which we tend to identify difference" (cited in Dyer, 1997). This argument is inevitably met with the challenge that it is advocating for "recentering rather than decentering" whiteness, which whiteness scholars like Ruth Frankenberg counter by insisting that it is necessary that we analyse the function of this invented social identity in the same way that we analyse other racial groups impacted by whiteness (2009:1). Otherwise, we run the risk of allowing it to continue to grow and morph unexamined, functioning as the norm against which all other identities are exoticised.

One of the features of whiteness that is most key to its perpetuation is the fact that, as Harris points out, whiteness "is built on exclusion and racial subjugation" (1993:283). Rather than functioning as an objective fact or reality, whiteness is "an ideological proposition imposed through subordination" (Harris, 1993:281). Similarly, South African scholar Melissa Steyn (2005: 121) defines whiteness as an

ideologically supported social positionality that has accrued to people of European descent as a consequence of the economic and political advantage gained during and subsequent to European colonial expansion. The position was originally facilitated by the construction of "race," which acted as a marker of entitlement to this position. The phenotypes, especially skin colour, around which the notion of "race" was organized, acted as a useful means of naturalizing what in fact were political and economic relationships, supporting the fiction that the inequalities structured into the relationships were the result of the endogenous, probably genetic, inequalities between 'races.'

Steyn's work foregrounds the ways in which whiteness has been and continues to be socially constructed to serve political and economic ends throughout slavery, colonialism and apartheid, and importantly *continues* to be supported and reshaped to maintain white supremacy. Steyn's work is especially useful to this dissertation because of its attentiveness to the South African context in particular. Nonetheless, Steyn's theorising of whiteness resonates with American and European scholars whose findings concur with hers. Ruth Frankenberg points out that "Whiteness emerges as a process, not a 'thing,' as plural rather than singular in nature" (2009:1).

Ruth Frankenberg expresses a desire to “unfreeze” the concept of whiteness, revealing what is thought of as a static concept to be multifarious, complex and amorphous (2009).

The assumed but imaginary “frozenness” of whiteness is important because whiteness has been posited as the ideal and is therefore considered to be highly desirable. When that which is desired is free to reshape itself to remain out of one’s reach, success becomes unattainable. This impossibility is rooted in the nature of whiteness as a moving target, its borders constantly shifting, mutating as proximity is achieved and boundaries threatened. The fact that the approximation of whiteness through the adoption of cultural values and behaviours is still not enough to buy white privilege makes clear that it is only the possession of white skin and European heritage that allows for the accrual of the benefits of white privilege. Fanon uses the term “epidermalization”—the linking of privilege to the skin—or as Stuart Hall puts it, “literally, the inscription of race on the skin” to describe the internalisation of black inferiority that results from the idealisation of whiteness (Fanon, 2008; Hall, 1996:16). The term “epidermalization” is particularly useful for the analysis of colorism because it refers to the layer of skin that becomes conflated with racial identity. Colorism relates specifically to the top layer of flesh, the epidermis, which is seen as a marker of our racial identity. For the victim, the experience of colorist discrimination remains lodged beneath this layer, just below the surface, alienating the self from the skin.

The key weapon that empowers whiteness and enables colorism is comparison. As Kellington points out, “colonial discourse rendered the category “white” normative (average, neutral) at the same time that it was rendered empty, and thus definable only in relation to others” (2002:163). Alfred J. Lopez describes this paradox as the “white lie of assimilation” (2005:18). According to Lopez (2005:17),

The idea of whiteness as a cultural aesthetic norm combines with the idea of whiteness as a desirable and even necessary trait for colonized subjects who wish to achieve class mobility and financial success in a colonized (or formerly colonized) society. This tandem of whiteness as both aesthetically desirable and pragmatically necessary begins to be exposed as a product of the so-called civilizing mission of colonialism. The effect of the colonial sham on the individual level is a subject who simultaneously identifies with the white ideal and is radically alienated from it.

As Frantz Fanon displays in *Black Skin, White Masks*, despite the success of one's assimilation through mimicry and an internalised belief in the superiority of whiteness, the "ultimate success" of acceptance by and through whiteness remains unattainable, "even [for] those subjects who most successfully internalise the white ideal, no matter how skilled the mimicry or complete the performance" (Lopez, 2005:18). My meditation on the consequences of whiteness and racism are largely informed by Fanon, especially *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008/1967) because of both his emphasis on the psychological impact of oppression and subjugation and his use of literary texts as the focus of much of his analysis. In this foregrounding of literature, Fanon highlights the importance of narratives (and fictional narratives in particular) in the creation and perpetuation of ideology.

As both Fanon's life and work point out, despite the impossibility of acquiring benefits withheld primarily for whites, the desire to achieve them does not dissipate. One of the ways in which these benefits have historically been attained is through "passing for white." In her seminal essay "Whiteness as Property," Cheryl Harris discusses the benefits of whiteness and why people of colour with the ability to "pass" attempt to do so, even "by fraud if necessary" (1993: 277). Harris describes passing as "a feature of race subordination in all societies structured on white supremacy," the persistence of which is "related to the historical and continuing pattern of white racial domination and economic exploitation, which has invested passing with a certain economic logic" (1993:277). It can be argued that while passing reveals the absurdity of racial discrimination and segregation, it also supports and affirms the power of whiteness by legitimising the benefits associated with whiteness and allowing the ideological structure to remain unchallenged. The conditions of racial oppression created by the institutional privileging of whiteness created conditions wherein "self-denial and the obliteration of identity" were made to seem "rational and, in significant measure, beneficial" (1993:283). One of the most important points Harris makes that is also intrinsic to my understanding of assimilation and passing is that racial subordination and white supremacy proscribes "choice, if by that word one means voluntariness or lack of compulsion" because historically, "race subordination was coercive, and it circumscribed the liberty to define oneself. Self-determination of identity was not a right for all people but a privilege accorded on the basis of race" (1993:285). As such, though I view the characters analysed in this text as subjects with agency, it must be acknowledged that this agency

is exercised under conditions of oppression and subjugation, meaning that the choices that they make are with limited options and high stakes.

Also intrinsic to my understanding of the complex realm of assimilation is the concept of desire, and specifically “category-maintenance work”⁸ as described by Crain Soudien and Hannah Botsis (2011) and Bronwyn Davies (1989) as a method of negotiating circumstances overwritten by inequality. In their analysis of the experience of young women in South Africa working to navigate the transition from apartheid into the context of the politically espoused inclusion of the post-apartheid era, Soudien and Botsis point out that “racial subjectivity takes particular form in and through the presence of desire” (2011:90). They point to accent in particular as a, “terrain of desire upon which race relations play out and hegemonic norms are contested and maintained” (2011:90). Their research exposes how supposedly “new” constructions of race remain tied to aspirations that are determined by the racial legacies of apartheid and colonialism, which are skewed in favour of whiteness. As Soudien and Botsis point out, these desires are, “deeply invested in the psycho-social complex of what being “white” means and what its opposite, “black,” is assumed to stand for” (2011:91). As they go on to point out, “both of these categories—“whiteness” and “blackness”—are, of course, states of mind and not biological attributes (2011:91). Nonetheless, they “come to be constructed as such by the subjects of identity and so come to present themselves as acutely important sites of desire” (2011:91). As the texts analysed in this dissertation will show, these “desires are constituted through the narratives and storylines, the metaphors, the very language and patterns of existence through which we are ‘interpellated’ into the social world” (Davies, 1990:501). Soudien and Botsis propose that understanding desire is key to unpacking why people privately reproduce ideologies that they publicly reject.

Soudien and Botsis’s work is supported by Steph Lawler’s research on class aspiration, which informs my understanding on class identity and societal and internal perceptions of class aspiration. In her article, “‘Getting out and Getting Away’: Women’s Narratives on Class

⁸ Category-maintenance work “refers to the decision that an individual makes with respect to what he or she will invoke, and when to mark his or her identification with or distance from a category or identity” (Soudien & Botsis, 2011:91).

Mobility,” Lawler researches the experience of women who believe themselves to have successfully executed the shift from ‘working-class’ to ‘middle-class’ but still bear the stigma and discomfort of their previous class identities because they never feel “allowed” to fully inhabit the habitus of their new identity (1999). As a result, they experience a significant amount of pain and a, “sense of estrangement associated with this class movement” (Lawler, 1999:1). Lawler’s work is informed by Pierre Bourdieu, whose theories on symbolic capital and habitus also inform the class analysis conducted in this project. Through the lens of Bourdieu, Lawler depicts class identity as, “inscribed on the self, so that the self, itself is class marked” (1999:1). Identifiers such as class identity and race are seen as embedded in who we are as people, which limits our abilities to transcend these identity markers or to shift into other groups. Lawler’s work is especially important to this research because of her focus on the pathologisation of class transgression, which I believe overlaps with the pathologisation of racial transgression. These factors coalesce to further stigmatise attempts at assimilation and adaptation, allowing for the rendering of these acts as pathological.

When something is stigmatised as pathological or unnatural, an automatic referent of this designation is shame. Shame is therefore buried deep within the affect of assimilation, as a consequence of the conflict between disempowerment and agency mobilised in controversial ways. In Pumla Gqola’s *Rape: A South African Nightmare*, Gqola quotes Kenyan artist and activist Shailja Patel who suggests that if, “you want to understand how power works in any society, watch who is carrying the shame and who is doing the shaming” (cited in Gqola, 2015:38). The etymology of the word “shame” originates from the Greek word “scham” which means to cover one’s face (Probyn, 2010:72). Shame occurs when there is a gap between the desired self and the actual self. According to Sarah Ahmed, it “can be described as an intense and painful sensation that is bound up with how the self feels about itself, a self-feeling that is felt by and on the body” (2004:103). Shame compels its bearer to hide, flee or look away because of a perceived failing and the sense that the failing has been observed. This is even more so if the shame is also observed, “hence the word ‘shame’ is associated as much with cover and concealment, as it is with exposure, vulnerability and wounding” (Ahmed, 2004:104). Ahmed’s theorising of shame is particularly relevant to this project because she analyses the embodiment of shame and the way physical bodies can be both sources of shame and markers of it

(2004:104). Zoe Wicomb's work on shame speaks specifically to the experience of shame within the coloured population in South Africa, and also to the larger context of slavery and colonialism. Wicomb connects the experiences of shame within the coloured population to the historical associations with miscegenation that root coloured identity in illicit sex with colonisers (1998). Both Mohammed Adhikari's (2005) and Zimitri Erasmus's (2001) work on coloured identity also support Wicomb's and undergird this research, as their extensive and thorough research lays the groundwork upon which much of my analysis of coloured identity is based.

Wicomb's work corresponds with the works on intersectional feminism on which my reading of women's experiences throughout this dissertation is based. As I examine the interstices of colour and class-based discrimination, I am mindful of not overlooking the ways they overlap and intersect, disadvantaging those who do not meet Western standards of beauty and behaviour. In her ground-breaking essay entitled "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw introduces the concept of intersectionality, a term she uses to encapsulate the overlapping matrix of discrimination black women experience as a result of their identity as both black and female (1989). Crenshaw (1989:149) uses the following analogy to illuminate the concept:

Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in an intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. . . . But it is not always easy to reconstruct an accident: Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts to determine which driver caused the harm.

While the concept of intersectionality is most famously used in relation to feminism and racism, it can also be applied to other overlapping social identities that intersect to exacerbate the experience of domination, discrimination and oppression. Colour and class, as is the case with other intersecting aspects of one's social identity, are not "unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but rather...reciprocally constructing phenomena" (Collins, 2015:2). Therefore, the concept of intersectionality resonates with the experience of colorist discrimination reflected in sociological, anthropological and literary representations because colorism cannot be viewed in a vacuum; it is intertwined with and exacerbated by class discrimination.

Alongside Crenshaw's theorising, I also rely on Patricia Hill Collins' work on black feminist thought, especially the aspects of her research that focus on the function of "controlling images" (stereotypes) of black women in the US context which support racial oppression, especially because her explication can be applied similarly in the South African and Caribbean context as well (2002). "Controlling images guide behavior toward and from these persons, constrain what is seen and believed about them...as products of the social organization of power, such images define the parameters of appropriate and transgressive subject positions for a particular group" (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009:22). Collins' explanation of the term "controlling images" highlights the way the creation and reproduction of these images are used to oppress and repress (Collins, 2002). While stereotypes are often seen as arising organically from "untrue" misconceptions, the phrase "controlling images" is useful because it highlights the social construction of these stereotypes and their function as tools to police and maintain borders. These controlling images have been transmitted intergenerationally through various means including literature, political rhetoric and the media, thereby retaining their power over the years and continuing to affect the portrayal and treatment of women of colour since the colonial encounter.

As I analyse the intergenerational transmission of racial ideology in the texts I make use of racial socialisation theory, which "involves messages and practices that provide information concerning one's race as it relates to (a) personal and group identity, (b) intergroup and interindividual relationships, and (c) position in the social hierarchy" (Belgrave & Allison, 2018:223). Racial socialisation includes the, "tasks Black parents share with all parents— providing for and raising children... but [also] include[s] the responsibility of raising physically and emotionally healthy children who are Black in a society in which being Black has negative connotations" (Peters, 1985:161). Much of this socialisation is positive instruction on how to navigate racism and prejudice and when it is done effectively it can help to buffer children against the harsh realities of living in a hostile and racist environment (Stevenson, 1994). Parents communicate, "an awareness of racial barriers" to their children as a form of proactive socialisation to "transmit the values, norms, and beliefs that are needed by successive generations to cope in an environment in which race plays a critical role" (Miller, 1999:496).

However, studies indicate that some parents reinforce race and colour-based discrimination within the home and amongst their children, and “overall empirical evidence supports classical prejudice theories that highlight the role of parents as important socializing agents in the acquisition of racial prejudice in their children” (Dhont & Van Hiel, 2012:231). In a similar study, Moncrieffe examines one of colonialism’s techniques of dominance and subjugation: “transforming consciousness and integrating the histories and economies of the colonized countries within a Western ‘master narrative’” (2009:87). Through a study of Ugandan, Haitian and Jamaican children’s self-perception relative to their white Western counterparts, Moncrieffe reveals a disturbingly low self-image among the black children she interviews. Many report holding white people and the West in higher regard than their respective home countries and people of their own race, which Moncrieffe attributes to negative racial socialisation in their homes, schools and communities. She reveals that even “people who appear to lose from ‘the way things are’ may, yet, vigorously defend the *status quo*” (2009:89). Alongside my exposition of intergenerational racial socialisation I also analyse literary representations of childhood, since many of the texts function as bildungsromane, charting the full breadth of the main character’s lives and focusing especially on lingering memories from childhood.

These studies on racial socialisation and the intergenerational transmission of racial ideology are further complicated by Christina Sharpe’s work, in which she analyses texts (written and otherwise) that span much of the history of the transatlantic slave trade, unearthing the “monstrous” acts of violence and violation that establish the slave-master relationship and entrench subjugation and subjectification (2009). This work echoes Sharpe’s in its emphasis on the intergenerational transmission of subjecthood and conceptualisations of racialisation inherited from slavery, especially as articulated through shame. Additionally, this study, like Sharpe’s, is “a diasporic study that is attentive to but not dependent upon nations and nationalisms,” instead taking a wider view that encapsulates the larger diasporic experience post-slavery and colonialism (2009:3).

This study extends the work of racial socialisation studies not only because of its focus on literature, but also because of its concentration on colorism in particular. It also looks at these topics specifically within the lens of British colonialism, a choice that was made because of “the

specificity of colonial relationships in the Caribbean” and elsewhere (Edmondson, 1999:8). Belinda Edmondson foregrounds this specificity, highlighting the ways male Caribbean authors modelled themselves after a Victorian standard of decorum and gentility to demonstrate their masculinity (1999). Edmondson’s work unearths the gendering of the national project in the post-colonial Caribbean, exposing the ways in which nation building as routed through the adoption of Victorian Englishness came to be seen as a particularly *masculine* endeavour, thereby excluding women and linking masculinity to both the (re)creation of the nation-state and the project of decolonisation. In her work, Edmondson counters this erasure by writing women back into the narrative of national formation, a task to which this project is also dedicated. In foregrounding the experiences and writing of women, I participate in the ongoing project of surfacing the silenced narratives of women and revealing the gendering of colour- and class-based discrimination.

As she traces the roots of Englishness in the Caribbean nation-state, Edmondson also points out that “the way that English speaking West Indians view blackness is in large part determined by their relationship to Englishness” (1999:7). This specificity and understanding of particular relationships to empire underpins this work and is the basis for the focus on Anglophone Caribbean texts. I position my work at the interstices between critical race, affect theory, Caribbean feminist and postcolonial studies and the work of postcolonial scholars Simon Gikandi and Edward Said (1993) are integral to my analysis. Gikandi’s *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (2011) provides insight into the shaping of European culture and tastes through slavery, while *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (1996) further complicates this with a view of the imposition of British sensibilities through colonialism. In addition to these works, I locate my project within the larger context of West Indian feminist criticism, especially that which foregrounds national identity and the intersection of race, class, colour and gender, especially the work of Carol Boyce Davies (2002), Carolyn Cooper (1995) and Deborah Thomas (2004). In so doing, I centre the experiences of women in particular, who bear the additional burden of gender-based discrimination in addition to the other intersecting forms of discrimination that people of colour contend with globally.

In chapter one, I focus on a common theme in post-colonial theory, the question of language, in the novels *Dog-Heart* by Diana McCaulay (2010) and *What Will People Say?* by Rehana Rossouw (2015). Rossouw's novel is set in Cape Town's Cape Flats at the height of the state of emergency in the mid 1980s. Through the experiences of a coloured family attempting to navigate the strictures of apartheid in order to secure positive futures for their children, Rossouw exposes the ways in which coloured assimilationism manifests as social pressure to approximate whiteness, especially in terms of language and accent, as the ideal and only route out of poverty (Adhikari, 2006b:479). McCaulay's novel, which is set in Kingston, Jamaica, bears striking parallels to Rossouw's despite the difference in context. The main character in *Dog-Heart* is a young black man from an urban "ghetto" neighbourhood raised in dire poverty, who through a chance encounter with a middle-class Jamaican "browning" is given the opportunity to work his way out of poverty, but only if he can assimilate middle-class Jamaicanness enough to put her and her fellow middle-class counterparts at ease. Here the negative connotations of Jamaican patois, similar to those attached to Kaaps (Afrikaans) slang, take centre-stage as they conspire to disadvantage characters whose ways of speaking do not meet the standard of the "Queen's English."

The second chapter focuses on romance across colour lines, concentrating specifically on texts that foreground the experiences of women of colour engaged in relationships with white men. These relationships are encouraged by the valorisation of whiteness the women's communities express, but then condemned and pathologised when they are actualised. In Rayda Jacobs' novel *Joonie* (2011) the titular character is a young coloured woman who falls in love with a white man shortly before he is conscripted into the South African border war. Throughout the novel the main character engages in multiple interracial relationships and discovers that she may have been the product of one herself, and the response of her community to the relationship sheds light on the ways the boundaries of race are policed by both dominant and subordinated groups. This novel is juxtaposed against Zee Edgell's *Beka Lamb* (1982), a novel set in Belize during the independence period. The novel is written by the titular character as an elegy on her best friend Toycie, who dies in a state of mental instability precipitated by the dissolution of a relationship with her "pania"⁹ boyfriend and the miscarriage of the child conceived of their union. The

⁹ The Belizean term "pania" as it is used in Edgell's text refers to someone of Spanish descent (Pousada, 2002).

striking similarities between the ways both young women are treated across these geographically disparate contexts expose the ways that women of colour continue to bear the mark of slavery-era stereotypes regarding their sexuality and femininity and the role their communities play in reifying these tropes.

One of the cornerstones of Britishness and perhaps the most enduring legacy of the British Empire are the rules of respectability and decency espoused by British imperialists and colonisers as the antidote to what they perceived to be the savagery and barbarism of the lands they claimed for the Queen. In the third chapter, I focus on how Victorian ideals derived from England became inscribed upon colonial spaces and their inhabitants through colonisation. This is especially so for women who bear the responsibility of the home and childrearing in patriarchal societies and thus are expected to transmit and convey respectability in the domestic realm. I analyse the impact of this imposition through a short story entitled “How to Beat a Child the Right and Proper Way” by Colin Channer published in the anthology *Iron Balloons: Hit Fiction from Jamaica’s Calabash Writer’s Workshop* (2006) and Zoe Wicomb’s *Playing in the Light* (2006). Both works of fiction feature female main characters and a fraught mother-daughter relationship structured around unspoken colour and class conflict. In “How to Beat a Child the Right and Proper Way,” the main character Ciselyn reflects on raising her children and particularly her daughter in Kingston, Jamaica, in the 70s in the afterglow of independence. As a dark skinned woman, Ciselyn feels compelled to constantly exhibit her respectability, intellect and industriousness to ameliorate the negative stereotypes associated with dark skinned black women. I analyse this text alongside Wicomb’s *Playing in the Light*, in which Helen, the main character’s mother, makes the choice to “pass” for white despite being classified as coloured during apartheid. Helen’s decision hangs like a spectre over the family during the transition into the post-apartheid era and determines everything about how she raises her daughter and lives her own life. Through the juxtaposition of these two characters my aim is to explore the social and psychological impact of the politics of respectability as well as the intergenerational transmission of this particular discourse.

In the fourth chapter I conclude with exile, yet another common trope in postcolonial fiction, to analyse the role that social pressures and intersectional colour- and class-based discrimination play in precipitating departure. In both of the texts examined in this chapter, *The Same Earth* by Kei Miller (2008) and *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* by Zoe Wicomb (1987), the main character chooses to flee to England in the hope of finding less discrimination and more freedom abroad. In this chapter I analyse the relationship the imperial subjects in both contexts have to the metropole and how this impacts the main character's decision to travel. *The Same Earth* is set in the mid-70s allowing for a reflection on the immediate legacies of the Windrush generation through the experience of the main character Imelda Richardson who leaves Jamaica for school in the UK and then returns after a few years spent abroad (2008). In Wicomb's influential and renowned short story collection the main character Frieda also attends school in the UK to gain distance from both apartheid and her stifling family and extended community (1987). Both Imelda and Frieda feel compelled to return home and do so after a few years abroad, and their experience of return and the difficulties they encounter as they re-acclimatise to the changes in both themselves and the home they left behind also form a significant part of both texts.

In the conclusion, I summarise the key overarching themes that arise through this comparative approach to textual analysis. I discuss the importance of putting these two contexts in conversation with each other, and also the implications for national identity of the issues of race and colour that I present. This insight contributes to the fields of intersectional feminism, critical race theory and whiteness studies through its analysis of the impact of empire and the intergenerational transmission of racial ideology. I also suggest ways in which the theoretical framework presented here can be applied to other contexts and potential further avenues of research.

Chapter One

“Silencing the Native”: Linguistic Imperialism in *Dog-Heart* & *What Will People Say?*

The power even in casual conversation to represent what is beyond metropolitan borders derives from the power of an imperial society, and that power takes the discursive form of a reshaping or reordering of “raw” or primitive data into the local conventions of European narrative and formal utterance... And these were under no obligation to please or persuade a “native” African, Indian, or Islamic audience: indeed they were in most influential instances premised on the silence of the native. (Said, 1993:99)

In the aftermath of racialised, oppressive histories, many nations in the Caribbean adopted a form of “rainbowism”¹⁰ that would later be echoed in South Africa’s post-apartheid reformation. In the context of these politically espoused commitments to multiculturalism, cultural plurality and acceptance have been promoted as key tenets of the shared national philosophy. The idealisation of a multiplicity of cultures coming together to form a united “rainbow” of “one people” implies that all aspects of these various cultures hold equal measures of value and importance, each enriching the whole with their diverse perspective. Since language is one of the key aspects of culture, a truly multicultural society must be accepting of all languages spoken by its inhabitants, giving none preference over the others. South Africa is an example of a “multilingual society,” with the eleven most commonly spoken languages all declared as “national languages” post-apartheid. For other nations aspiring to the ideal of multiculturalism including many nations in the Caribbean, socio-historical dynamics and the limits of bureaucracy have not allowed for the adoption of this approach. Instead, in many of these nations English has been chosen as the dominant, shared language connecting all citizens.

Muddying this attempt at unification under the banner of “English” is the reality that often different groups speak their own “Englishes,”¹¹ each reflecting the cultural background, heritage, and social class of the speaker. Nonetheless, in nations previously colonised by the British, so-

¹⁰ South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu is credited with the coinage of the term “rainbow nation” to describe “the beauty in difference to be found among all the different people in South Africa” that he envisioned would help heal the wounds of apartheid (Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu, 2018). Since then, the term “rainbowism” has been used pejoratively to refer to the myth of multicultural unity in post-apartheid South Africa.

¹¹ Linguist Braj B. Kachru likens the process of developing different versions of English to alchemy, theorising how “The legacy of colonial Englishes has resulted in the existence of several transplanted varieties of English having distinct linguistic ecologies – their own context of function and usage” (1:1986).

called “standard British English” has been enshrined as the ideal. As Said points out above, imperial powers wielded full authority to write over the narrative of the “native,” attempting to erase indigenous languages to silence opposition and tout their own superiority. Against this backdrop, other languages and accents become seen as markers of low status or lack of intelligence, indicating either unwillingness or inability to assimilate to the new “norm.” Therefore, despite the professed equality of the various cultures in these multicultural societies, speakers of alternative Englishes and indigenous languages find themselves at the bottom of the social and political hierarchy.

Frantz Fanon devotes the first chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks* to “The Negro and Language,” wherein he analyses the impact of linguistic oppression on the colonised soul. According to Fanon, “to speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization” (2008/1967:17). The right to freely express one’s own culture through language has been denied to citizens of colonised and previously colonised nations. As Fanon (2008/1967:18) points out,

every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.

Though Fanon’s work is situated in the context of French colonialism, this statement also articulates the struggle of cultural dominance exemplified by the enforcement of the use of standard British English as a cultural norm in nations colonised by the British. The ability to assimilate linguistically is seen as a moderator of blackness, making the speaker “whiter” in proportion to his or her level of English mastery. As Fanon points out, because of the dehumanisation of people of colour on which colonialism and imperialism hinged, the desire to achieve or approximate whiteness becomes not only an aesthetic or superficial concern, but deeply tied to one’s claim to humanity.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o has devoted much of his writings to extending Fanon’s argument on the psychological and political impact of the imposition of European languages on Africa. He asserts

that “the choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people’s definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe” (wa Thiong’o, 1986:4). Ngugi illuminates the many ways in which the politically enforced requirement to communicate in English has been used as a tool to control and disempower colonised peoples: “Language was meant to complete what the sword had started and do to the mind what the sword did to the body” (qtd. in Gumede, 2017). What this “domination of a people’s language by the languages of the colonizing nations” achieves is “the domination of the mental universe of the colonised” (wa Thiong’o, 1986:16). By denying colonised peoples the right to speak their own languages, the coloniser denies the colonised the right to express and embody their own culture. This is important to literature in particular because “Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world” (wa Thiong’o, 1985). For this reason, Ngugi sees it as especially important that authors express themselves in their native languages, empowering those languages and cultures rather than enriching the body of literature published in European languages, to the detriment of their own peoples and cultures.

Both Fanon and Ngugi’s work illuminates the psychological impact of the unidirectional pressure to assimilate to the dominance of standard British English upon previously colonised peoples. Even if one is able to speak and understand English, speaking it with a disesteemed accent can result in many negative consequences. The meaning of an accent “resonate[s] and take[s] on social significance in an already existing system of signs and practices,” operating within discourses of power and oppression that subjugate speakers who do not subscribe to the ideal established by those in power (Reddy, 2001:65). This complicates one’s ability to choose how to speak and whether or not to assimilate to white, Westernised ways of being and speaking because “[t]he fact of race subordination [is] coercive and circumscribe[s] the liberty to self-define. Self-determination of identity [is] not a right for all people, but a privilege accorded on the basis of race” (Harris, 1999:117). This coercion proscribes one’s ability to “choose” how to function, especially in societies that only allow access to pathways of success for those who ascribe to a particular ideal. Under the conditions of racial oppression created by the institutional privileging of whiteness, the “self-denial and the obliteration of identity” of linguistic

assimilation is made to seem “rational and, in significant measure, beneficial” (Harris, 1999:117).

Sociolinguists have conducted extensive research verifying the negative biases against speakers whose accents are associated with low-prestige and disadvantaged groups (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010; Giles & Sassoon; 1983). However, this research has not adequately addressed the ways speakers of marginalised accents have either rebelled against or assimilated to this pressure in attempts to counteract these negative biases. There is also much work to be done to unpack the impact of this linguistic pressure in relation to the discourses of racism, colorism and classism, especially looking beyond the positive side effects of increased social mobility to the potential negative impact of linguistic assimilation. As Soudien and Botsis point out, “While there is work that shows how racial desire has been aestheticized through, for example, fashion and hair management, the deeper and less visible ways in which this desire is produced and manifested, as in the case of accents, are not as evident” (2011:90). This chapter attempts to surface this sublimated and often side-lined issue, examining the use and role of language and accent in particular in two novels, *What Will People Say?* (2015) by Rehana Rossouw and *Dog-Heart* (2010) by Diana McCaulay.

What Will People Say? is South African author Rehana Rossouw’s first novel. Rossouw’s background as both a native Capetonian and a professional journalist informs the text, which recounts in vivid detail the story of a family of five living in Hanover Park on the Cape Flats, a marginalised, low income community still reeling from the effects of residential segregation and racial and economic inequality caused by apartheid (2015). Hanover Park was designated as a coloured area during apartheid, and in an interview with Rossouw, the author states that her intention in writing a book set in this particular community is to show “apartheid with a small ‘a’ and politics with a small ‘p.’ What happens to people when you take them out of a life that they’ve known for generations and you dump them into a physical space that doesn’t allow for family life, that doesn’t allow for normal human interactions? The place itself is a character in my book” (McKaiser & Rossouw, 2017). To paint an authentic picture of Hanover Park and its inhabitants, Rossouw pivots between the perspective of the different main characters, narrating

the story in a mixture of Standard English and Kaaps.¹² In a radio interview Rossouw (McKaiser & Rossouw, 2017) states her stance on the use of Afrikaans and Kaaps in her work:

It's about time people understand us. I wasn't prepared to compromise on the language. I couldn't make my characters real - especially the gangsters. The gangsters don't speak 'the Queen's English.' We have our English. We should be proud of our English. Our English is what differentiates us...one of the major things about our identity is our language and how we arrived at this language. Afrikaans is not a white people's language. Afrikaans is a pidgin language which slaves used in order to communicate with their Dutch masters. I feel very strongly about the language issue.

This perspective on language complicates the arguments of theorists like Fanon and Ngugi who view languages that do not originate on the African continent as “other.” Rossouw’s choice to claim Afrikaans, a language that comes into being through the colonial encounter and which incorporates much of the lexicon of a European language, resists this view of what ought to be considered “foreign.” Rossouw and many others who share her opinion of Afrikaans and Kaaps see themselves as rightful owners of this language, not as colonial subjects on whom it has been imposed. As such, she chooses to fully claim and legitimise Afrikaans and Kaaps in her writing, refusing to “other” them through italicisation or defining them in a glossary. Rossouw normalises this multilingual fluidity of English, Afrikaans and Kaaps by intertwining them seamlessly into the narrative in the same way that her characters naturally incorporate the languages into their speech. Rather than writing to an outside audience unfamiliar with Afrikaans or Kaaps, her work presumes a reader who shares the background of the characters and is therefore able to transition between the languages along with them. This approach also counters the marginalisation of Kaaps, which occurs even amongst coloured people, some of whom view the use of forms of English or Afrikaans that differ from standard British English or so-called “suiwer¹³ Afrikaans” as a source of shame.

There are many similarities between McCaulay’s outlook on language in *Dog-Heart* and Rossouw’s perspective on the use of language in *What Will People Say?*. McCaulay’s novel fluctuates between both sides of Kingston, Jamaica: so-called “uptown Kingston,” made up primarily of middle- and upper-class suburban enclaves, and “downtown Kingston,” the term commonly used to refer to the densely populated, low-income communities surrounding the

¹² I use the term “Kaaps” to refer to the Afrikaans vernacular widely spoken on the Cape Flats.

¹³ The word “suiwer” in Afrikaans means “pure”

city's central business district. Like Rossouw, McCaulay intertwines English and Jamaican vernacular throughout the text, fluctuating between languages as she shifts between her two narrators—Sahara, a light-skinned upper-middle-class Jamaican woman, and Dexter, a dark-skinned black Jamaican boy from a poor, inner-city community. In an interview, McCaulay reflects on the resistance she received towards this approach and the difficulty of finding a publisher for a multilingual novel: “Some agents didn't like the Jamaican... [They] felt it was too limiting, but I wasn't prepared to compromise on that” (Paul, 2010). Notably, both McCaulay and Rossouw use the term “compromise” to refer to their resistance against the pressure they felt to write their novels solely in Standard English. However, a pertinent difference between the two authors is their positionality as writers - Rossouw is a coloured woman from a community very similar to the community she depicts, while McCaulay is a light-skinned Jamaican from an upper-middle-class background, writing about working-class people from poor, inner-city communities. Another difference between the two is that while Rossouw insists that foreign readers work to understand her text and the characters she portrays, McCaulay expresses concern from making her writing accessible to outside audiences. She says, “I struggled greatly with language – I wanted to write in Jamaican when I was in Dexter's voice, without making the novel inaccessible to a non-Jamaican speaker. I am still not totally satisfied with how that came out” (Paul, 2010). In the attempt to make the Jamaican language she includes accessible to non-Jamaicans, McCaulay's use of the vernacular is not as fluent as Rossouw's, resulting in the loss of a certain measure of authenticity which she also acknowledges. Despite this, her attempt to “do justice” to the language and convey to readers of all nationalities a sense “of the richness of the language that is part of [her] culture and heritage” (Diana McCaulay, 2011) contributes to a decentring of English as the only acceptable language for Jamaican literary production.

Both McCaulay and Rossouw explore attempts to circumvent the glass ceiling of colour- and class-based discrimination through the manipulation of language and code-switching in their novels. Many authors have addressed how the alienation from one's mother tongue is accompanied by a feeling of loss, which can be tempered but also complicated by the material benefits garnered in the exchange. Both novels are situated within the genre of “popular fiction,” and their realistic, approachable writing focuses on the current state of their nations, giving their writing a sense of additional measure of both relevance and urgency. Their texts illuminate the

ways in which contemporary South African and Caribbean culture continues to reinforce colonial hierarchies and reinscribes the marginality of darker skinned peoples in covert ways that demand compliance and penalise defiance. Because language is perceived as such a salient marker of race, class and identity, it is often the tool used to negotiate these borders. These texts prove that this negotiation is not without casualties; the loss of the version of one's self represented by one's primary voice, the "mother tongue," is accompanied by an alienation from both self and community with far-reaching consequences.

Routes & Routes of Ideology in *Dog-Heart*

The main character in Diana McCaulay's *Dog-Heart* is Sahara Lawrence, a middle-aged business woman who attempts to assuage her middle-class "browning"¹⁴ guilt by helping a poor black teenager named Dexter and his impoverished family gain access to the opportunities she and other members of her class enjoy. Sahara and Dexter first meet when he is begging for money in the shopping mall. From the outset, the power imbalance in their relationship is shifted in her favour, as she has the ability to either grant or deny his request, or to have him removed from the mall parking lot by a security guard. She opts not to reject him however, because he appears "respectful" and "hopeful" (22), and she resolves to help him overcome his poverty. Sahara's requirement that Dexter be submissive and desperate but not hopeless in order to be deserving of help further illuminates the power imbalance between the two characters. She delivers food and school supplies to his family weekly and arranges for Dexter and his younger siblings Marlon and Lissa to attend an expensive elite private school. Throughout the course of the novel, Sahara uses Dexter and his family to facilitate her journey towards becoming "an uptowner who reached out" (100), attempting to "civilise" them by facilitating their assimilation into upper middle-class Jamaica.

¹⁴ Patricia Mohammed provides a definition for the term browning that places it within a larger socio-historical context that takes into account the use of this term and others like it throughout the Caribbean: "A large proportion of Caribbean women and men are referred to euphemistically as 'mixed-race'. The terms used to describe people of mixed-race vary by territory and have been incrementally added to or changed over time. The original nomenclatures such as sambo, musteephino, mulatto, creole, etc. have been replaced at present to include terms like brown skin, mulatto, clear skin, light skin, red-nigger, dougla and browning" (2000:22).

The text alternates between Sahara's Standard English (occasionally peppered with patois slang terms) and Dexter's Jamaican Patois. Jamaican cultural critic and scholar Carolyn Cooper has often advocated for a more progressive, decolonised perspective on Jamaican patois (Cooper, 2017). The critical and hostile responses she has received indicates the negative outlook on patois held by many Jamaicans. Despite the widespread use of the dialect, a negative outlook on Jamaican patois is especially common amongst middle-class Jamaicans. "Many Jamaicans - including patois speakers - do not believe it is a language in its own right. The idea of elevating patois to official status also offends the middle classes, who see it as an attack on English and their membership of a global English-speaking community" (Turriff, 2002). For this reason, McCaulay's choice to use patois in the text is controversial and provocative.

McCaulay complicates her controversial choice to narrate part of the text in patois by compartmentalising the use of the dialect, ascribing it almost exclusively to the black lower-class characters in the chapters written from Dexter's perspective. This compartmentalisation suggests that Sahara, as an upper middle-class Jamaican browning, speaks primarily in standard British English, eschewing use of the vernacular. According to Belinda Edmondson middle-class Jamaicans often underplay the extent to which they converse in patois because of its associations with the lower classes and with ignorance (2009). This choice sends a powerful message regarding Sahara's allegiance; she does not speak the "black" language of the "lower classes." Dexter notes this in one of his first interactions with Sahara, remarking that she "talk like a Jamaican with good education" (49). The use of the qualifier "good" infers that in Dexter's opinion the patois he speaks is an indicator of his "bad" education, ignorance and low class status in relation to Sahara's educated, modern, "civilised" superiority. This juxtaposition is based on the colonial association between whiteness and "development, modernity, intelligence, innovation, technology, cultural and aesthetic superiority, and economic and political domination" (Pierre, 2012:74), delineating blackness as the antithesis of these traits.

The stereotypical association between blackness and inferiority in the text is most saliently depicted in the connection the characters make between black men and violence and gangsterism. This is first hinted at by the novel's title, which is a patois term that refers to ruthlessness and cruelty, exemplified by characters like Merciless and Lasco, gangsters from the

inner-city slums who attempt to conscript Dexter into their way of life. Marked by dark complexions, undesirable addresses and Jamaican accents that are deemed unacceptable in “higher society,” these young men are portrayed as having no alternative route to financial security beyond a life of crime. Denotatively the term “dog-heart” infers an animalistic savagery that dehumanises characters like Lasco, distilling their complex identities into one-dimensional subjects defined by violence. The colonial stereotype of black masculinity that links black men to violence, inferior intelligence, hyper-sexuality and gangsterism affects the way Dexter and other black male characters are treated throughout the text. As Patricia Hill Collins explains, “Because black men did hard manual labour [during slavery], justifying the harsh conditions forced upon them required objectifying their bodies as big, strong, and stupid” (Collins, 2005:56). Collins points out that this objectification had a sexual component as well: “White elites reduced Black men to their bodies and identified their muscles and their penises as their most important sites” (Collins, 2005:57). These stereotypes have a history rooted in colonialism and refined through slavery (Collins, 2005). In their interactions with others they alternatively choose to either play up these stereotypes or to behave in ways that counter them in an attempt to account for others’ imaginations, but they have little control over how they are perceived. As will be shown, Dexter’s masculinity affects the expectations he is expected to meet and the types of opportunities that are available to him in a context defined by intersections of race (and specifically colour), class and gender.

Dexter’s positionality as a dark skinned man at the bottom of the social hierarchy makes him more aware of the realities of Jamaica’s pigmentocratic society than Sahara. He has a complex understanding of the nuanced intersection of colour and class and from his perspective the reader is given insight into the ways this intersection manifests in everyday life. On the surface, it can appear as though the category of being an “uptowner” is reserved solely for wealthy “brownings.” However, according to Dexter’s worldview, “Uptown people can be black, brown, white, chiney, coolie or Syrian” (14). This reveals how wealth is implicated in the uptown/downtown divide; with enough material wealth and the assimilation of “uptown values,” even dark-skinned people can be let into this exclusive club. This complex, interlocked hierarchical system of race and class also allows for a type of “racial reclassification” on the basis of class affiliation. This is notable because it challenges Fanon’s concept of

epidermalisation; Jamaica's complicated racial hierarchy is so interwoven into its class system, that wealth can override skin colour if it is significant enough (2008). This is highlighted by Dexter's description of his fellow students at Holborn Prep as "all brownins, some light, some dark. None a them is black" (98). This comment reveals that the definition of both brownness and blackness can be malleable. Though some of the students have dark complexions, their identity as "uptown children" precludes them from being "black" in the way that Dexter perceives himself to be black. Because he associates his own blackness with poverty and low social class, uptown children do not qualify as black, regardless of their skin colour.

According to Patricia Mohammed, the primary requirement for inclusion in the valuable category of browning is the expression of middle-class sensibilities. Mohammed (2000:34) describes it thus:

The term browning in Jamaican society, coined in the 1980s, represents a range of skin colours which have progressed at least to lose the degree to which it is worked out by mixture of the purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre*) as was done during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries... The browning in Jamaica comprises a recognizable combination of black and white (and/or other ethnic groups such as Chinese or Jews). More apposite, the browning also represents a class of people, the post-colonial inheritors of privilege and status passed on by the white upper class. Blacks are still perceived to occupy the lowest rung of the class pyramid in Jamaica.

The class of people referred to as brownings are associated with the cultural mores and standards of the British and American upper classes and those characteristics associated with whiteness, while the "downtown" black population is associated with African history and heritage. For example, Dexter notes that "Uptown people like movie 'bout love, they don't come out for show with kung fu or plenty back people. They come for certain kinda black people, like that one Morgan Freeman with all the mole on him face, or Denzel, or that nice-nice gal Halle Berry. Wesley Snipes, Eddie Murphy – now, uptown people don't come to see them so much" (14). Wesley Snipes and Eddie Murphy have dark complexions and represent a less palatable form of blackness that does not appeal to the upper classes in the way that Morgan Freeman, Denzel Washington and Halle Berry do. This distinction between upper-class and lower, browning and blackness, is closely guarded and policed in both the public and the private realm.

McCaulay provides insight into the perpetuation of a belief in the superiority of whiteness and Britishness in the Jamaican context through Sahara's childhood memories. As portrayed in the

novel, these beliefs are reinforced through various ideological state apparatuses working to enforce ideology through coercion and interpellation (2001/1970). An example of this is Sahara's Aunt Gladys, a white British expatriate who is described as "a loveless woman who'd never married or had children for good reason – she hated everybody. [Sahara] had no idea why she'd left England to come to Jamaica, since she loathed the place" (27). As a white British woman in Jamaica, Aunt Gladys wields power she would not have access to at home in England, so even though she dislikes Jamaica, she does not return to England. Sahara recalls that Aunt Gladys treated their house servants "disdainfully, speaking very slowly as if to children. She corrected their English and searched their bags when they were leaving" (36). Aunt Gladys' behaviour reveals her racist assumption that her domestic workers are mentally disabled and childlike because they do not speak standard British English. Her "corrections" assert her dominance as both the "master" of the house and as a "master" of the English language, affirming her superiority in a culture that prizes English fluency. Many scholars have analysed the preoccupation with British English in Jamaica including Christopher Charles, a scholar who has written extensively on colorism and Jamaica's relationship to whiteness. Charles points out that "The correct accent on air [for newscasters in Jamaica] is a non-Jamaican accent of the American and British varieties" (Charles, 2009:160). Aunt Gladys' possession of this language in its "purest" form, genuinely acquired in England and transplanted into the Jamaican context, gives her significant symbolic power over those who aspire to this "ideal" but are unable to achieve it. As a British subject, she relishes her place at the top of the Jamaican pigmentocracy and cultural hierarchy.

Though Sahara and Aunt Gladys eventually part ways when Sahara is nineteen years old, her inclusion in the novel as background detail regarding Sahara's worldview and upbringing is purposeful. Aunt Gladys' racist ideology serves as contextual evidence for the basis of the contemporary social landscape Sahara negotiates in her interactions with Dexter throughout the text. Indeed, the spectre of Aunt Gladys and the intergenerational transmission of her racist ideology looms over Sahara's interactions with all the black characters she meets throughout the novel.

Sahara's memories of the reinforcement of white superiority in the domestic realm are mirrored in the public sphere. She recalls how her teachers reinforced white superiority by perpetuating a colorist hierarchy and the privileging of whiteness in the classroom (67):

We had a French teacher who once went around the room, commenting on everyone's grooming and appearance – the black girls got the worst of it. I remember the only girl whose appearance met with Madame's approval was one of the English girls, a freckled redhead with really short hair. "Look at Bridget," Madame said, while Bridget hung her head. "Neat hair, not sweaty, pressed shirt. I want to see all of you looking like Bridget. Ngugi wa Thiong'o reveals how this kind of indoctrination in educational settings is a continuation of the imperial violence of the colonial machine: "the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom. But where the former was visibly brutal, the latter was visibly gentle" (1986:9). Not only does Sahara's teacher encourage her students to pursue the unattainable goal of emulating Bridget's white, European appearance and behaviour, but in addition to the policing of their appearance, "the teachers corrected anyone who spoke patois. We understood using patois meant you were low class" (65). Decades later, Dexter reports the same experience with his principal: "He want us to speak proper English, even though plenty time I know him say things wrong" (69). As Knaus & Brown point out, "education has been implemented across the globe as the primary public space to maintain this oppression through defining knowledge as Whiteness" (2015:16). As both Dexter and Sahara recount, their teachers perpetuate the belief in a direct link between class, language, appearance and appropriateness, marking the black body as inherently wrong and Jamaican patois as lower-class.

Reflecting further on her high school years in the period immediately following independence, Sahara also recalls, "In Sixth Form, the black-black girls started to wear their hair natural and berated those who straightened their hair. If a browning prefect sent a black girl to the back of the line at break, the black girl would raise her fist in a black power salute" (66). This recollection highlights the colorist nature of the social hierarchy, as the darker skinned girls make the choice to embrace their hair's natural texture and it is expected that the prefect will be a browning and not a darker skinned black student. Sahara's invocation of the patois practice of repetition is significant, especially considering her otherwise consistent use of standard British English throughout the novel. The doubling of the word black into "black-blacks" serves two

purposes – it places emphasis on the word and also indicates the degree of blackness relative to others. Therefore, this “lapse” into patois emphasises her view of her black classmates as blacker than the other black students, or “hyper-black,” because of their perceived militancy and resistance to anti-black oppression, signalled by their natural hair. As a teen Sahara is not supportive of the black power movement of her peers and sees herself as their opposition as a browning (66):

I was wary of the black power girls, scared of their intensity, annoyed by the incessant talk of slavery and a whole bunch of isms – colonialism, imperialism, racism, tribalism. Move on, I thought – this all happened too long ago to matter. I was sorry for two English girls in our class, who were called Backra Misses¹⁵ and addressed with exaggerated subservience. The black power girls ignored the brownings, who were not black enough to be part of their set, but too black to be called Backra Missy. The brownings disliked the black girls and made fun of their looks – their large backsides, broad noses and fat lips. The brownings called the black-blacks Zulus.

Sahara’s sympathies rest with “the English girls.” She portrays the black girls as the aggressors, who she views as intimidating the white students and ignoring the brownings. As a browning, Sahara has the privilege of ignoring the many “isms” her darker counterparts are forced to reckon with, and despite her disinterest in the “isms” her black classmates decry, she and her fellow brown classmates perpetuate them. The black students are punished by their fellow students, who mock their traditionally African features because of their unwillingness to conform to Western standards and the dominant ideology of white superiority.

Consequences for National Identity

These recollections are particularly significant because of their timing, as they all occur in the period immediately following independence when the nation is supposedly relishing the post-colonial non-racial harmony occasioned by the inauguration of the new dispensation. As Sahara points out, even then “when we recited our national motto, a version of the American *e pluribus unum* – “Out of many, one people” – nobody believed it. One of the black power girls wrote

¹⁵ The term “Backra Massa” refers to a white slave plantation owner or overseer, and “backra missy” refers to the plantation owner’s wife.

“Out a one whole heap, ‘nuff”¹⁶ on the blackboard before school one morning” (66).¹⁷ By translating the motto into Jamaican patois and amending the second clause to indicate what she believes to be Jamaica’s real social condition, Sahara’s schoolmate points to the fallacy at the core of the nation’s optimistic and ultimately misleading motto. While the motto implies racial solidarity, in reality the various races remain segregated along colour and class lines. Jamaicans are not united as “one people,” but rather many different racial groups vying for control and recognition (Cooper, 2012b). Furthermore, as evidenced by the teacher’s attitude towards the black students and the student’s attitudes towards each other, as well as the use of English for the motto and not Jamaican patois, out of the “many” racial groups, one has been given pride of place above the others.

When the student writes her amended version of the motto on the blackboard, “she [does] it in front of everyone and [throws] the chalk down afterwards,” indicating that it is an intentionally political and radical act (66). She does not write it as a note to pass around to her friends but writes it where neither student nor teacher can ignore it, as though it is being proposed as a matter for class discussion. The teacher’s response to the student’s provocative act of rewording the national motto and inscribing it on the blackboard is symbolic: “Mrs. Ellis came in and said, ‘Clean the Blackboard, girls’ She didn’t ask who had written the new motto on it” (66). The teacher is unwilling to engage with the issue and “erases” it from view, negating the student’s viewpoint and obliterating it as a potential topic of class discussion. This erasure mirrors the government’s denial and attempted erasure of the simmering racial tensions amongst the people. McCaulay’s placement of this important scene and statement in a high school classroom reminds the reader that the nation, like these teenage girls, is struggling through a difficult, volatile emotional and developmental stage, having outgrown the innocence and naivety of youth but not yet transitioned into adult maturity. In a sense, they are both teenagers. Sahara’s memories of her experiences at school depict the contradictions inherent in Jamaica’s declaration of itself as a non-racial nation, meanwhile harbouring deep-seated racism and inequality. Her coming of age

¹⁶ “Nuff” is a patois term that is the shortened form of the word “enough” but that refers to the opposite, i.e. many, a bounty or surplus.

¹⁷ Jamaican cultural critic Carolyn Cooper echoes a similar concern when she asks, “Why is our national motto, ‘Out of Many, One People’? Who are the ‘many’ and who are the ‘one’? Who came up with this motto? And what is its purpose? Who is fooling who?” (Cooper, 2012)

parallels the nation's, and as time progresses they both become less convinced of the veracity of the optimistic and naïve myths they had been taught to believe.

The novel's reflective look at Jamaica in the period right after independence through Sahara's memories and then decades later provides insight into the tenacity and ongoing prevalence of the colorist and classist discrimination entrenched during colonialism. Two generations later Sahara's son Carl echoes the discriminatory beliefs of his great-aunt Gladys, emphasising not only the intergenerational transmission of these ideals but also the persistence of colour and class-based discrimination into contemporary times. Though Sahara points out that when Carl was a baby she refused to leave him alone with her aunt because she "could not abide the thought of [her] son being influenced by [Aunt Gladys'] worldview" (36), she notes that in terms of his outlook on poor black Jamaicans, "He *sounded like* Aunt Gladys but he often told me he did not remember her. She was in his genes" (90; emphasis added). Carl's ability to "sound like" Aunt Gladys functions on two levels—not only has he adopted her standard British English, but also her mind-set and outlook on Jamaican blacks. His adoption of Aunt Gladys's white, expatriate outlook on Jamaica as a Jamaican-born teenager reveals that though time has passed, little has changed in regard to the promotion and idealisation of White, Western ideals. The recurrence of these presumably "old fashioned" and outdated views amongst contemporary youth is an important commentary on the tenacity of these ideals. Though they may have receded slightly for Sahara's hopeful, post-independence generation, Carl's expression indicates that this racist, classist view appears to be making a resurgence in the generation to follow.

As Dexter's foil in the text, Carl throws into stark relief the contrast between middle-class brownings and their lower-class black counterparts. Comparatively, Carl lives a charmed life endowed with both the skin colour and cultural capital considered to be most valuable in this context. He speaks almost exclusively in standard British English, except when he "lapses" into patois when speaking with Dexter, indicating that he has the power to code-switch to serve his own ends. He is also distanced enough from lower-class Jamaican black experiences to hold harmful stereotypes that have little bearing on his own life (221). Carl associates blackness and poverty with violence and sexual promiscuity, referring to the young women at his school as

“slack”¹⁸ and assuming that all “the boys have knives” (88), blaming their underachievement on poor work ethic and disinterest in school, asserting that “they bring it on themselves!” (88). When Sahara accuses him of being racist, he responds, “It’s got nothing to do with color. Yeah, poor people are mostly black in Jamaica, but there’re lots of successful black people. Black people run this country. Look at the government. I have black friends at school” (89). Carl’s acknowledgement that “poor people are mostly black” (89) evidences his use of the code words “poor” and “ghetto” for black. He uses the “token black friend” explanation (which Sahara disproves by pointing out that he does not have many) and the example of black Jamaican politicians to prove his own lack of colour bias, but then makes discriminatory comments that belie his proclaimed non-racialism. As Kimberlé Crenshaw points out, this kind of “tokenistic, objectifying, voyeuristic inclusion is at least as disempowering as complete exclusion” (2005:364). Carl’s view on his black peers is clearly impacted by his internalisation of racist stereotypes, despite his unwillingness to admit it. He views the teen pregnancy of lower-class black women as immoral, but disregards the fact that his own brown middle-class mother gave birth to him while still a teenager, evidencing Belinda Edmondson’s point that “part of the problem of female public performance [in the Caribbean] is that there are different registers of signification accorded to different racial types, even as the society continues to underplay race and overplay class as the criteria by which such distinctions are made” (2009:116). When Sahara informs Carl that because of his partially black ancestry his attitudes amount to a form of self-hatred he responds, “I’m not black and I don’t hate anybody. I told you, it’s nothing to do with those children being black. It’s to do with where they are from, their *class*, their *attitudes*” (89). Carl’s willingness to admit class bias over colour bias reflects his adoption of a fictive “non-racial” ethos that attempts to obscure colorism by attributing difference solely to class status.

Carl’s outlook exposes how unwillingness or inability to ascribe to white European behaviours and cultural mores can be used as an excuse to alienate and discriminate against blacks and the poor. Sahara admits to sharing this sentiment, acknowledging that “although [she] hated what he said, [she] knew in [her] heart [she] felt the same way” (90). Because she looks down on them and sees herself to be racially and culturally superior, her desire to provide Dexter and his family with “access to opportunity” manifests as an attempt to erase their blackness and replace it with

¹⁸ Patois slang term suggesting sexual promiscuity

white norms and standards to help them assimilate to mainstream Jamaican culture. She does so by providing them with the means through which they may amass the cultural capital she believes is necessary to ameliorate the negative stereotypes of blackness. In his explication of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, Johnson (1993:7) describes it as knowledge that

equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts... The possession of... cultural capital is accumulated through a long process of acquisition or inculcation which includes the pedagogical action of the family or group members (family education), educated members of the social formation (diffuse education) and social institutions (institutionalized education).

In her analysis of the functioning of cultural capital according to Bourdieu's theory, Lawler points out that according to this paradigm, middle-class "tastes and dispositions are coded as *inherently* 'right', *inherently* 'tasteful'" (1999:6; emphasis in original). The reader is first exposed to the avenues through which Sahara learns what constitutes 'legitimate' cultural capital and is then made privy to the similar ways in which she inculcates Dexter and his siblings.

The primary vehicles through which Sahara attempts to achieve her transformation of Dexter and his family are education and language. Because she brings them food weekly without which they suffer hunger and malnutrition, Dexter and his family have little freedom to choose whether or not to obey her demands for cultural assimilation. Consequently, they comply with her requirements regarding how they speak, what they buy and how they spend their time. When she first informs them about the scholarship to Holborn Prep their response is initially tepid, but they pretend to be eager when they sense her dissatisfaction (86):

Aren't you happy? Miss Sahara say, looking around at all a we, "I went to a lot of trouble to organize this." Her face make up bad-bad and I know say we have to talk quick-quick or she stop visit, with her three bag a food and treat. "Yes, Miss, yes Miss," I say in best Plaza way, "thank you Miss. We very happy to go prep school.

In response to her question Dexter adopts the same tone and style of speech he uses when begging for money in the Plaza, where he addresses security guards as "sir," behaving in a way that will be deemed "mannersable" and deferent to authority (14). By doing this, he attempts to convert his patois into the type of English required to meet the standards and expectations of the "uptowners" who will reject him if he does not. In another scene, Sahara instructs Dexter and Marlon to dutifully repeat after her when she "corrects" their patois with English. Satisfied with the result she remarks, "it was cute, the way [they] copied my speech" (102). In the same way that it will later be shown Suzette does in *What Will People Say?*, Dexter engages in an

exhaustive process of self-editing when speaking to Sahara, changing “mi” to “I,” and “him” to “his” and “he” according to her insistent “correction” of his patois (92). Similarly, when the children attempt to write letters to their sponsors to reflect on their experience of prep school, Sahara says, “they struggled. I had to tell them what to write in the end” (103). She begins to write their story for them, both literally and figuratively, reframing their narrative in keeping with the progressionist notion that they are becoming gradually more modern, more human, as a result of their education and introduction to middle-class life. Sahara does so from her privileged position as a light-skinned, upper-class woman and does not adequately interrogate her role in their lives, assuming that they must be benefitting from her actions.

The same occurs at Holborn Prep, where Dexter notes the “black children is the ones that don’t talk good and get into trouble most of the time” (140). Dexter’s inability to understand the speech used in the Holborn Prep environment others him and renders him voiceless. When he is accused of having a conversation of an inappropriate nature by a fellow student who happens to be a wealthy browning, the principal takes the other student’s side over Dexter’s, forcing him to apologise for something he has not done. The issue is a question of language, as the principal assumes that while Dexter may not have meant to harm anyone, it is likely that he was “misunderstood” or “just too graphic” (138). His inability to flexibly appropriate the linguistic patterns of the space result in negative consequences. The principal urges him to “try and fit in” (138) and when he speaks, his language is corrected so frequently that it leads to confusion: “sometime it hard to figure out a conversation when everything get say twice, one time wrong and one time right” (137). In the midst of the confusion caused by the constant repetition, the message most clearly conveyed to Dexter is that he is consistently *wrong*, in behaviour and speech, and must be corrected by those who meet the standards of which he falls short.

Eventually the persistent “correction” of outsiders begins to undermine Dexter’s sense of self. He wonders “what [his] life woulda been like if [he was] born a different colour” (140). He comes to view his black skin as the main source of his misfortune and inability to meet the standards of Holborn Prep, where only the “black children is the ones that don’t talk good and get into trouble most time” (140). This becomes an indication to him that blackness is the problem, causing him to internalise—“epidermalize”—his inferiority (Fanon, 1986). He feels that his “life start split in

two,” describing the two versions of himself, the one that is at home in Jacob’s Pen and the version he must become at Holborn Prep, as incompatible. As Dubois asserts in his explication of “double consciousness,” this experience is a “twoness”: “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (Du Bois, 2014:7). The resonances between the concept of double consciousness and Dexter’s feelings of being split in the attempt to be one’s true self and the version of one’s self required by the dominant culture also extend to the lack of real opportunity available to this split subject. As Dubois decries “having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face” (Du Bois, 2014:8), Dexter points out the impossibility of achieving success through the pathway Sahara lays before him: “Miss Sahara think she can make us into uptown children. She think if we learn how to read and count, learn how to *behave*, get expose to *opportunity* – she always talking about *opportunity* – make uptown friend, then we will be like uptown people. I sure it not going go like that” (118). True to his expectation, he and his siblings are able to achieve little through assimilation and are in fact punished for their attempts.

Dexter’s peers from his community of Jacob’s Pen see his new “uptown” lifestyle, which is most evidently signalled by the new accents and language he and his brother acquire, as pretentious. As Lawler points out, “‘Middle-class’ accents are preferable in most social sites, but only when they are (or can pass as) *authentic*. When they are not, or cannot, they become a joke. In being ‘revealed’ as inauthentic, they are simultaneously marked as a pretension” (1999:17). Dexter’s brother Marlon, who works hardest to modify his patois into Standard English, experiences negative reinforcement from his community when he appropriates the new language and accent he is exposed to at Holborn Prep in Jacob’s Pen. When buying groceries in the local shop with the new English he has acquired from prep school, the shop owner disdainfully addresses him as “Master Marlon” and accuses him of being “speaky spokey” (126). The term “speaky spokey” refers to the affectation of a seemingly pretentious twang. As Bourdieu points out, this represents “the recognition of distinction that is affirmed in the effort to possess it” (1984: 251). The accusation of pretention is “levelled at people in whom what they *seem to be* is not (considered to be) what they *are*” (Lawler, 1999:171; emphasis in original). This gap between who you are and who you seem to be, when brought to light, is a source of shame for the ‘outed’ and humour for the observer. As Kuhn (1995:97) points out, this humiliation reinforces the belief that

that there is something shameful and wrong about you, that you are inarticulate and stupid, have nothing to say of any value or importance, that no one will listen to you in any case, that you are undeserving, unentitled, cannot think properly, are incapable of 'getting it right'. You know that if you pretend to be something else, if you try to act as if you were one of the entitled, you risk exposure and humiliation.

Marlon's experience confirms this. Furthermore, Dexter notes that their straddling of two worlds disqualifies them from both: "When this school business finish, where we going belong? Uptown people don't want us at school, not going to want us in any office job. And now our own people – people who know us from we a baby – don't want us around" (127). As a result of this multidirectional pressure and the policing of the boundaries of class and race, he is unable to make the transition into becoming the browning Sahara is trying to transform him into and who he longs to be, but is left with no choice since his former community no longer accepts him.

In the novel's climactic final scene, Dexter is forced to choose between the two worlds he has occupied since meeting Sahara. When he is expelled from private school and rejected by the upper-middle-class browning community, Dexter chooses to accompany two of his "gangster" friends to carry out a kidnapping to gain entry into a local gang, seeing gangsterism as the only viable route to the status he desires. In an unlikely twist of events, the other young men choose Sahara as their target, and despite going along with the plan initially Dexter backs out after capturing Sahara, choosing to shoot one of the boys and release her. This scene is told in the narrator's voice, who reveals that Sahara is unable to decipher what is being said amongst her kidnappers, Dexter included, as "their patois was thick and hard to understand" (234). Despite being able to understand Dexter in all their other interactions, in this pivotal scene he becomes undecipherable to her. Though he frees Sahara from what would have befallen her after the kidnapping, he is no longer a coherent and understandable part of her world. Both his words and his world are incoherent to her. Sahara's inability to understand him represents the final rejection of the middle-class browning world. At the same time, he turns his back on his home, as he must now flee Jacob's Pen and the inevitable retaliation of the other gang members. The novel becomes a fatalistic, cautionary tale, demonstrating that it is not possible for "a man [to] escape what he was born to be" (239). The impossibility of achieving the goal of whiteness Sahara has set for them is further cemented by the disastrous consequences Dexter and his siblings' experience. His brother Marlon dies in a police raid of their home, his sister Lissa becomes mute after she witnessing Marlon's tragic death and Dexter is forced to flee Kingston and leave the

only life he's ever known behind. The incongruence between their biographies and their desires is too stark. In Dexter's case McCaulay represents this incongruence spatially – Kingston cannot contain his untenable desires, so he must leave. This echoes a similar pattern in postcolonial writing preoccupied with identity and subjectivity, which often ends in exile. As Dexter flees Kingston, he hopes to find a world where he can live “no questions asked” and no longer be taunted by his inability to achieve the impossible.

“White-mindedness” in *What Will People Say?*

The challenge that Dexter flees resonates with Rehana Rossouw's *What Will People Say?*, which takes place in 1986, the year the apartheid government declared a national state of emergency. It focuses on the Fouries, a coloured family in an area designated as a coloured township. As Zimitri Erasmus points out, “being coloured often means having to choose between blackness and whiteness. When one lives aspects of both these cultural identities having to choose one means the denial of some part of oneself” (2001:14). As the novel foregrounds issues related to coloured identity in apartheid South Africa, it highlights the tense relationship to whiteness and blackness occasioned by the intermediary positionality of colouredness, which Heidi Grunebaum and Steven Robins refer to as “the grey zones between the essentialised and racialized blocs of whiteness, colouredness and black” (2001:171). These grey zones are characterised by “the cracks, fissures, ambiguities and continuing difficulties [of] negotiating the complex politics of location, identity and history in contemporary South Africa” (Grunebaum & Robins, 2001:171). Grant Farred theorises this “grey zone” as an “interstices,” describing it thus: “precariously balanced between two dominant groups, tenuously linked to both but with a firm “grip” on neither; their “hold” on whiteness and blackness is politically slight, which means the interstices is, in effect, the only place they can occupy” (2000:5). These opaque and equivocal terms highlight the complicated nature of coloured identity in the fraught context of racial politics in South Africa.

Mohammed Adhikari (2006b:467) has identified four constituents of coloured identity that he says have remained stable throughout the course of white rule in South Africa. He identifies them as:

the assimilationism of the coloured people, which spurred hopes of future acceptance into the dominant society; their intermediate status in the racial hierarchy, which generated fears that they might lose their position of relative privilege and be relegated to the status of Africans; the negative connotations, especially the shame attached to racial hybridity, with which colouredness was imbued; and finally, the marginality of the coloured community, which severely limited their options for social and political action, giving rise to a great deal of frustration.

Adhikari's framework summarises the main concerns raised by many scholars on coloured identity and is also a useful lens through which to view Rossouw's literary depiction of coloured identity in the novel. In their attempt to "raise [their] children decent," the Fourie parents idealise whiteness and view assimilation into white culture as the solution to their intermediary and marginalised status (10). The matriarch Magda attempts to control and police her children's behaviour to force them to conform to what she deems to be respectable behaviour in keeping with the white standard she has been socialised to idealise. Her children feel both alienated and oppressed by the imposition of this foreign standard, which leads to their rebellion against her iron-fist style of parenting.

The Fourie family's preoccupation with whiteness is made most readily apparent through the parents' privileging of their lighter skinned children and their attempts to approximate white appearance. Adhikari (2005:11) explains these "coloured assimilationist tendencies" as inspired by the desire to negotiate a liminal and marginal position:

The assimilationism, together with the insecurities engendered by their intermediate status, meant that in daily life the most consistent—and insistent—element in the expression of Coloured identity was an association with whiteness and a concomitant distancing from Africanness, whether in the value placed on fair skin and straight hair, in the prizing of white ancestors in the family lineage, or in taking pride in the degree to which they were able to conform to the standards of Western bourgeois culture. This "white-mindedness"... could give rise to a sense of shame with regard to any personal associations with blackness or an aggressive bigotry toward Africans.

This positions whiteness as a goal unachieved, rendering the subject aspiring to this goal diminished for having not yet achieved it. Adhikari explains that for many, "acceptance into white middle-class society was often seen as something that coloured people still needed to earn—something that would only be attained after a struggle worthy of the prize" (2005:8-9). Lawler's work on social aspiration links this struggle to shame, which she describes as "induced when the self is seen to be in some way diminished or inadequate" (1999:18). Zoe Wicomb also

uses the concept of shame as a lens through which to view coloured identity. According to Wicomb (1998:92),

miscegenation, the origins of which lie within a discourse of 'race', concupiscence, and degeneracy, continues to be bound up with shame, a pervasive shame exploited in apartheid's strategy of the naming of a Coloured race, and recurring in the current attempts by coloureds to establish brownness as a pure category, which is to say a denial of shame.

The novel's preoccupation with avoiding shame is signalled in the title, which highlights concern with the perceptions of others and meeting the standards set by society. Accordingly, much of the novel centres on the fear of falling into disrepute in the eyes of others, a preoccupation that eventually leads to the dissolution of the Fourie family unit.

The storyline establishes the Fourie family's history of generational colorist discrimination as rooted in the experiences of the matriarch, Magda's, experiences with her half-sister Violet as a child. Magda and Violet are adopted by their grandmother as children, but are treated unequally because of their complexion (280):

[Magda] was fair, like Ma and her mother, with straight hair. Violet came out dark and kroes. From the things Ma said, the sisters worked out that they had different fathers. Ma hated Violet's father, but she never came out and said why. She just picked on everything Violet said and did.

Magda and Neville replicate this colorist division with their three children, Suzette, Nicky and Anthony. Suzette is the lightest and most favoured of the Fourie children. Next in line is Anthony, who Magda describes as having hair "so fine and...skin so fair it was no wonder he had been Baby Jesus in the church's nativity play three years in a row and chosen to play Joseph when he got too big for the crib" (76). This establishes Magda's idealisation of her only son and her association between fine hair and fair skin and supernatural or celestial beauty. Nicky, the darkest Fourie child, is the least favoured of the three.

While Anthony is Magda's favourite child, her husband Neville idealises their daughter Suzette. While he appears to love both of his daughters equally, respecting Nicky for her intelligence, he is enamoured by his lighter skinned daughter Suzette's beauty, noting her thin frame, light complexion, straight nose and long hair as markers of distinction worthy of praise. Observing her he notes (16):

The puppy fat she had carried tightened at the edges when she grew up. When did she get so beautiful and why hadn't he noticed? Of all his children, Suzette favoured her mother the most, although her skin was lighter than Magda's and Anthony's. Her light-brown hair hung in a fat plait down her back. All she got from him was his small sharp nose. Contrastingly, Nicky is described as having a "dark face topped with a mop of curls," which gains her no favour in her parents' sight (3). Nicky notices that her mother is suspicious of her in a way that she is not of her elder sister or younger brother: "Suzette drank and smoked and discoed and vryed with boys, but Mummy didn't turn her suspicious eyes on her. Anthony could do nothing wrong in her eyes" (128). Suzette's and Anthony's appearance functions as a shield for them, allowing them to get away with things in the eyes of their parents. Neville is "so distracted by [Suzette's] looks" that he neglects to chastise her "about the smell of cigarette smoke rising off her breath and her clothing" and Magda's glorification of Anthony prevents her from noticing when he becomes involved with a gang (16). Tragically, Magda's idealisation of her "angelic" son is turned on its head when he is demonised for joining a gang and is shot dead by Ougat, a local gang leader who coerces him into membership. In the same way that Magda's grandmother favoured her over her darker skinned half-sister Violet, Magda perpetuates colorism among her own children.

Mirroring the favouritism she enjoys at home, much of the novel centres on Suzette, the oldest Fourie child. Suzette's light skin and straight hair are valuable assets in a society and community that idealises whiteness, and the novel traces Suzette's commitment to capitalising on this asset. Because Suzette's "skin [is] creamy like butter" (49) and she has long, straight, light-brown hair and a "sharp straight nose" (16), she pursues a career as a model, an avenue of escape from the life of low-level administrative work and menial pay she would otherwise be destined for. She sees modelling as "her ticket out" because it is potentially lucrative and exciting and provides her with the opportunity to "pass" as a white woman (50). Like the character Fikile in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut*, because of the racist environment in which she lives, Suzette "racialize[s] her dreams of socio-economic advancement," associating wealth and success with whiteness and poverty and failure with colouredness (Murray, 2012:96). As such, when she embarks on her modelling career she opts to pass as white because coloured models only advertise "skin lighteners and hair straighteners" (49). White models, on the other hand, are limitless. As Imani Perry points out, women like Suzette can manipulate their behaviour and appearance to pass as

white because they can “fit into a silhouette of beauty that possesses the shape and form of the physical ideal even if [they] are ‘other’ as long as common ethnic features are muted for the sake of that ideal” (2005:584). However, Suzette’s coloured accent and Kaapse Afrikaans slang marks her as different and “inappropriate” in the white spaces she seeks to occupy. Though typically modelling does not require speech, she is required to speak to gain access to the agencies and networks that can facilitate her career. After a series of encounters over the phone with white gatekeepers who rebuff her because of her accent, Suzette comes to see her voice as a marker of both her difference and her inferiority that stands in the way of the actualisation of her dreams. In order to circumvent these challenges, she resolves to modify her accent and put on a white, specifically *English* South African accent as a means by which to bypass the restrictions placed on coloured women in apartheid South Africa.

Suzette encounters the first of a series of white gatekeepers she must circumvent in order to gain entry into the white world of modelling when she attempts to acquire a modelling agent by cold-calling agencies on the phone. Each time she is greeted by a “larney”¹⁹ voice that indicates the class status of the speaker. These “larney” voices signal that the world of modelling is a white space in which she is unwelcome. The use of the term “larney” indicates that the speakers are using so-called “White English” which “in South Africa represents a certain type of established social capital, which is in contradistinction to other kinds of emerging social capital in the post-apartheid era and has come to represent a new form of power” (Soudien & Botsis, 2011:91). Suzette presumes the speaker is white and immediately becomes self-conscious. She attempts to “speak as larney as she could” but is rebuffed because she does not have a portfolio, the cost of which is beyond her ability to pay (50). The compounded impact of her class status as both a poor woman and the speaker of a disesteemed accent stands in the way of her dream. Although her appearance meets the requirements, her economic circumstances and class status bar her entry, revealing that it will take more than “good looks” to break through the glass ceiling preventing coloured women from achieving what is reserved solely for whites (50).

When the modelling agency route is closed to her, Suzette seeks entry into the field through a route traditionally associated with coloured women in the Western Cape, the garment industry.

¹⁹ The Afrikaans slang term “larney” has similar connotations to the word “posh.”

She is more welcome in this arena but sees it as only a stepping stone and not her end goal. In this setting Suzette must work to counteract the stereotypes and “controlling images” that pigeonhole coloured women to set herself apart, but even as she works to counteract them she reproduces them in other ways. As a coloured woman, one of the dominant controlling images Suzette must navigate is that of “the widely recognised stereotype of the *goffel*... a highly pejorative term that generally refers to working-class Coloured women and characterizes them as socially inferior, usually physically unattractive and sexually available” (Adhikari, 2005:23). The conceptualisation of “goffels” as “unattractive” is rooted in the belief that as darker skinned women with kinkier hair textures, coloured women do not reflect the Western standard of beauty and are therefore considered to be unattractive.

Zoe Wicomb’s short story “Friends and Goffels” in her short story collection *The One That Got Away* provides insight into the “goffel” stereotype through its depiction of the friendship of two women, Julie and Dot, who are teased by their fellow classmates for being “goffels” (2011). As the only students in the class “who were very dark, had short frizzy hair and flat noses with prominent cheekbones,” they are classified as lower-class relative to the “posh coloureds” (Wicomb, 2011:103). Wicomb relates, “Everyone knew the indexes of worth amongst coloureds, knew the acceptable conditions of facial features, and that good hair would always override the other disabilities. Dot and Julie did not qualify” (2011:103). Wicomb also calls attention to the gendering of the stereotype, highlighting the fact that “men were not called goffels” (2011:106). Regardless of the fact that the men Julie and Dot socialise with in university also have “frizzy hair and cheekbones,” (2011:106) they do not qualify as goffels because as Margaret Hunter points out, “physical beauty tends to be a more important status characteristic for women than for men” (2005:38). Therefore, “the complexion hierarchy is more central in the lives of women than men” (Keith, 2009:26). As such, the goffel stereotype is reserved for women, referring to a particular type of working-class, dark-skinned, coloured woman with *kroes* (kinky) hair. This pejorative term serves as a disciplinary measure designed to punish women who do not ascribe to Western beauty ideals. Throughout the short story Wicomb further illuminates the intersection between class and colour, pointing out that “a little bit of polish made mincemeat of goffelhood,” indicating that the accrual of middle-class values can transform the way a darker skinned woman is viewed by others (2011:107).

Similar to the way in which the “jezebel, whore or ‘hoochie’ is central in [the] nexus of controlling images of Black womanhood” (Collins, 81), as Adhikari points out, one of the key features of the “goffel” controlling image is the connotation of sexual availability. Suzette’s preoccupation with appearing “upper-class” and playing up the physical features that highlight her proximity to whiteness form part of her attempt to distance herself from these stereotypes. Though Suzette is able to circumvent some of the more detrimental aspects because of her light skin and European features, because she is coloured and female such controlling images imply her hyper-sexuality and lower-class sensibilities. The spectre of the perceptions associated with this image and other stereotypes of coloured womanhood haunts Suzette, who works hard to disprove them by behaving in a manner that is “sturvie” or “posh,” both of which she sees as white traits.

Though Suzette positions herself as a “posh coloured” because of her near-white appearance, when she takes on the role of an underwear model in the garment factory this undercuts her attempts at “poshness” by playing up her sexuality and sexual availability. As she parades down the runway for the white buyers in the factory, they have the power to “buy” what she is selling, making the moment disturbingly similar to the slave auction block. In one show, she catches the eye of Neil, a white buyer who seems particularly interested in her. She is sexualised in the encounter as Neil’s “eyes travel all over her body.” To attract his attention, she plays up her sexuality, “stretch[ing] her legs wide so he can get a good look” (100). The moment invokes the memory of Sarah Baartman and of the diasporic black women’s experience of “the shame of having had our bodies stared at” (Wicomb, 1998:91). The display and exploitation of Baartman during her short and tragic life helped to establish “the iconographic link between the black woman and sexual lasciviousness” and Suzette’s experience serves as another example of this (Wicomb, 1998:91). Though Suzette is proud of her body and seems to be “shameless” in the encounter, there are other compounding influences that pile the memory of shame upon the moment. When one of Suzette’s fellow employees in the garment factory, Melanie, notices Neil’s interest in Suzette, her response invokes the stereotype of coloured identity as rooted in miscegenation. Melanie says:

“There’s lots of white men that like dark meat. Where do you think coloureds come from?” ‘Suzette hadn’t thought about that. She thought coloureds came from each other. She kept quiet while she worked things out. Naomi Campbell had white boyfriends. Supermodels didn’t follow the rules’” (100).

This moment reinscribes hyper-sexuality and the memory of slavery on Suzette’s coloured, female body, as Melanie’s assertion that relationships with white men are “where coloureds come from” roots coloured identity in “miscegenation, degeneracy and non-belonging” (Gqola, 2010:22). Adhikari’s explication of the common joke that the first coloured person was born nine months after Jan van Riebeeck first landed on the Cape Coast provides further context for this damaging stereotypical association (2005:22). Another similarly pejorative joke is: “God made the white man, God made the black man, God made the Indian, the Chinese and the Jew—but Jan van Riebeeck, he made the Coloured man” (Adhikari, 2005:20). As Adhikari points out, “The van Riebeeck joke harnesses several key features of the racial stereotyping of Coloured people in apartheid South Africa and, indeed, reveals much about the popular concept of Colouredness” (2005:20). Like Melanie’s comment, this joke evokes the “whiteness” in coloured blood, while simultaneously emphasising the hybridity and thereby supposed impurity of coloured heritage. It also sexualises and invisibilises the black and indigenous woman by ascribing the birth of a child to only one of the two parents, Jan van Riebeeck, who is portrayed as the “conqueror” of the sexually available black/indigenous woman. “Through hybridity, the closely allied attributes of racial inferiority and illegitimacy are also assigned to Coloured people as a group” (Adhikari, 2006a:151). As Suzette begins to work out what this means for her, the example of Naomi Campbell, a famous black fashion model known for her interracial relationships, emboldens her. As bell hooks (1992:73) points out:

Naomi Campbell... is almost constantly visually portrayed nearly nude against a sexualized background. Abandoning her “natural” hair for blonde wigs or ever lengthening weaves, she has great crossover appeal. Labeled by fashion critics as the black Briget Bardot, she embodies an aesthetic that suggests black women, while appealing “different,” must resemble white women to be considered really beautiful. Though Campbell’s dark skin would normally disqualify her from the kind of rich European partner she is often paired with according to traditional expectations, as a supermodel, she is exempt from “the rules.” Campbell’s high cheekbones, thick lips and dark skin are ameliorated by her British accent and long, bone-straight extensions. Notably, Both Rossouw and Wicomb use Campbell as a referent. In “Friends and Goffels” Dot compares Julie’s appearance after returning from Scotland as “exactly like Naomi Campbell with long, sleek hair that bounced like

a horse's tail and a complexion that glowed deep honey" (Wicomb, 2011:107). For Dot, Julie's transformed appearance is a sign that she has "grown out of goffelhood," now "laminated with an overall glossy poly-something substance" (Wicomb, 2011:107). Rossouw and Wicomb invoke Campbell as the "anti" or "reformed" goffel. She has transformed her appearance and behaviour sufficiently to transcend the controlling image of "goffelhood" and is then held up as an example of what is possible for those willing to adjust their language and behaviour in order to assimilate.

Suzette's response to the controlling images of coloured identity which she works to counteract represents her response to the idea that "Coloured identities have been constructed in contexts of domination which have left little room for cultural autonomy and control over self-representation" (Erasmus, 2001:22). The accumulation of negative controlling images coalesce to inspire feelings of shame and self-doubt that undermine Suzette's confidence and sense of self. When Suzette and Neil begin their relationship, Neil serves the role of interlocutor for her into the "white world," as Sahara does for Dexter in *Dog-Heart*. An imbalance of power is intrinsic to the kind of relationship wherein an established group member attempts to initiate a newcomer into that group. Both parties are not on equal footing, leaving the newcomer (in these instances Suzette and Dexter) in a position of insecurity. In Suzette's case, the insecurity she displays in her interactions with Neil signals her awareness of her lack of power and lower social status in the relationship, and her attempted assimilation is one way she strives to make up for this perceived lack.

The most glaring examples of Suzette's attempts at assimilation can be seen in her verbal communication with Neil. Because she is unsure about "how to talk to him" (101), Suzette makes an effort to monitor her language and extract the slang terms that call attention to her coloured upbringing. She worries that "he [will] hear in her voice where she was from, what kind of person she was" (178). Suzette views her upbringing as inferior to Neil's, making it a "problem" that could potentially drive a wedge between them (178). She evidences her internalisation of the belief that a white man would not and could not have a romantic interest in her solely because of her race by chastising herself for having "high hopes thinking she could

make a white man *smaak*²⁰ her” (135). She considers such a romantic relationship to be something to aspire to, and has “high hopes” that it might occur. Furthermore, she believes that by lying about her origins, she can “make” Neil like her. She carefully edits her speech, removing the “fok’s” and “kak’s” that usually pepper her language in order to mimic his “larney accent” (102) and not sound “so coloured” (102). She associates her way of speaking with ignorance and Neil’s with intelligence, a point that is reaffirmed repeatedly in their interactions with each other. When he invites her to the movies she says “That would be *kwaai*²¹ ... very nice” and wonders “When would the time come when she could talk to Neil without sounding stupid?” (178). When she notices Neil’s backside and thinks of it as a “firm hol,” she determines that “She must think before she talked, she couldn’t say words like hol. She had to use proper English; try to sound like a girl from Lansdowne. She had to remember to use *sturvie* words, like Simon Templar in *The Saint*” (134). Suzette notes the various linguistic differences between herself and Neil and his friends: “They swore a lot, although they said fuck not fok. They said *lakker*, instead of *lekker*. *Kwaai* things were either *lakker* or *kiff*” (138). Her linguistic transformation begins slowly as she inserts words from their vocabulary into her own and removes terms that mark her as coloured to hide the fact that “she [is] a bit darker and a lot poorer” (139). She replaces her appraisal of Neil’s “hol” with “bum,” reminding herself, “His bum was ripe like a peach...not his hol” (140). She changes her grammar mid-sentence, saying “I got to ... I have to go to church” (143). Suzette’s constant self-editing destabilises her otherwise strong and confident personality as she attempts to reorder her world and her language to meet Neil’s standards.²² When thinking of a way to describe having sex with Neil (131),

She wasn’t sure if *naai* was the right word for what she did with Neil. What was the right word? Making love was the word in Mills & Boon romances, always at the end of the book. Fucking sounded better. That’s what people in America said on tv. Both words were better than *naai* or *pomp*. She would listen to what Neil called it and use that word from now on.

Suzette dismisses familiar local slang in favour of European and American slang. She begins with the European Mills and Boons romance novels, indicating that European culture is valued highest on her internal cultural value system. Moreover, Mills and Boon novels feature primarily white, European lovers embroiled in steamy love affairs and cater to a white, Euro-American

²⁰ *Smaak* is an Afrikaans slang term for “like.”

²¹ *Kwaai* is an Afrikaans slang term for “cool.”

²² This pattern is repeated in Wicomb’s story “Bowl Like Hole” from her collection *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town* addressed in chapter four (1987).

audience. They idealise romance between white partners, and do not typically feature interracial relationships, signalling Suzette's desire to either enter her relationship with Neil as a white woman or be made white by the relationship. In addition to the more genteel term "making love" appropriated from Mills and Boon novels, she considers American slang, seeing either of those two options as preferable to her own Afrikaans slang terms. Eventually, she decides to call it "sex" after receiving Neil's seal of approval through his use of the word. Her decision to allow Neil to determine what term is most appropriate is evidence of her handing authority over her language to him. This exhibits the power imbalance between the two of them as he becomes the arbiter of knowledge and respectability in their relationship.

After spending an evening at Neil's house and in the company of his white friends, Suzette looks at herself and sees that "her skin look[s] lighter than normal on the black leather couch" (142). The behavioural changes she initiates after meeting Neil and his friends cause her to believe that her skin has begun to look lighter and therefore more beautiful as a result of her encounter with white culture and society. This serves as evidence that her relationship with Neil has set her on a path towards not just becoming *like*, but actually *becoming* a white woman and the model she dreams of being. She likens Neil to Richard Gere and her experience to the storyline of the film *An Officer and a Gentleman*: "She really believed that if a factory worker in America could get a befokte guy in a film, it could happen to her also" (177). Neil then serves as the fairy-tale hero who will rescue her from the poverty and shame associated with colouredness and usher her into a new, "problem-free" white life.

Another white gatekeeper who facilitates Suzette's transition into whiteness is Neil's friend Maureen, a fashion industry insider. Maureen plays a more active and intentional role in Suzette's conversion and seems to relish watching Suzette's attempts to become more "white." When Suzette meets Maureen at Neil's dinner party, she describes her "as having a "spook white face" (135). Maureen's whiteness is extreme, further signalling her superiority to Suzette and her "authentic" whiteness, to which Suzette aspires. Suzette worries that Maureen will "think [it's] wrong for her to socialize with whites" (136) and feels uncomfortable speaking around her. In the presence of Neil and his friends, Suzette's otherwise confident personality becomes insecure. In addition to language, other cultural markers separate Suzette from her white counterparts at

the dinner party; they discuss rugby, a sport stereotypically aligned with South Africa's white Afrikaner population, while she is more comfortable discussing soccer since "there were a lot of Man United, Liverpool and Arsenal supporters in Hanover Park" (136). During their conversation "Suzette listened but didn't open her mouth once; she was bang²³ they would see who she really was – a stupid matric girl from Hanover Park" (136). As with Dexter, Suzette worries that the gap between who she is and who she seems to be will be revealed by either her accent or something she says, exposing her as a fraud.

Suzette sees Neil's friend Maureen as an authority on beauty and fashion and therefore receives Maureen's stamp of approval of her beauty as a confirmation of the feasibility of her dreams. When Maureen likens Suzette's appearance to Grace Kelly's "timeless" beauty (227), even though "Suzette had never heard of Grace Kelly...she stared in the mirror for hours, searching for the princess" (227). Suzette cannot see Grace Kelly in her features, but she hopes to see a resemblance to validate Maureen's perception of her. The comparison to Kelly, an American actress who married the Prince of Monaco and became a princess in the 1950s, reinforces Suzette's conception of being turned into a "princess" through her encounter with white society. After Maureen arranges a photo-shoot for Suzette and she has her makeup done professionally by a makeup artist Maureen hires, Suzette feels as though she knows "how Cinderella felt on her wedding day. Polished like a princess" (226). The makeover Maureen arranges transforms Suzette into the "princess" she hopes to become. However, while Suzette perceives her experience to be a positive one in which she is praised for her beauty, much like her first encounter with Neil, the experience is marred by underlying currents of exploitation and exoticisation. When she first meets Marc Fontaine, the photographer who takes the photos for her portfolio, he objectifies her and sees her merely as a sexual object (227):

Suzette didn't know where to look while Marc looked her over... he was looking at her like she was a sucker he wanted to lick... Marc took three mincing steps to the right, crossed his skinny legs and stared at Suzette's profile. She had no idea what was going on. Maureen had asked her to stand in the middle of the lounge and the two of them had been staring at her ever since. Marc eyeballed her breasts and hips, then twirled around her one more time, pausing at the back. Suzette could feel his eyes on her bum.

Suzette is so excited to have her dream to become a model come true that she is unaware that she is being objectified in the process. Her objectification is further exacerbated when she attempts

²³ "Bang" is an Afrikaans slang term for "scared".

to question the way Maureen and Marc observe her by asking, “What’s going on? Why you looking at me like that?” (227). In response Marc winces at the sound of her accent and then silences her, “Shh. Don’t say a word. Just stand there and be you” (228). His response and displeasure is caused by her accent and grammatical errors. The silencing of Suzette’s voice, which symbolises her culture and upbringing, is no longer symbolic. It manifests literally, as she is told to “be herself,” but remain mute.

The characters in *What Will People Say?* are portrayed as having a similar relationship to Kaaps as the Jamaican characters have to patois in *Dog-Heart*. Rossouw uses multiple examples throughout the text to illuminate the ways in which community members in Hanover Park are just as attentive to nuances of language and tone as the people of Jacob’s Pen in *Dog-Heart*. As Marlon is teased for speaking standard British English when buying groceries, so is the youngest Fourie child, Anthony, in Hanover Park. When asked by a local gangster, Ougat, if he has a girlfriend he responds, “I haven’t got one at the moment” (43). In response, “Ougat threw his words back at him with a false, high voice. ‘I haven’t got one at the moment. Hey ouens, listen to this laaitie. He speaks like the fokken queen of England. I haven’t got one at the moment, he says to me when I ask if he’s got a kind’” (43). This comment is met by the laughter of the other customers in the shebeen where the conversation takes place, and though Anthony believes “there is nothing wrong with speaking proper English,” the laughter of the listening audience indicates otherwise (43). Eventually the gang members conscript him, teaching him “to sabela, to speak prison slang,” a meaningful step in his transition to becoming one of them (113). Anthony’s experience of externally inflicted social pressures contrasts with Suzette’s, whose pressure to ascribe to the standards of whiteness are perpetuated from within her own internalised sense of white supremacy.

In contrast to Anthony, Suzette’s internalisation of the silencing of her voice is evidenced by the fact that over the course of her relationship with Maureen, “She had taken up Maureen’s way of speaking – everything was amazing and lakker. The girls at the factory laughed at her for talking white” (228). Despite her attempts to “talk white,” Marc still points out that, “She will definitely need elocution” (228). Maureen’s response that “She’s getting better already, she’s quite the mimic” is sinister; Maureen is pleased to hear Suzette mimic her way of speaking and become

more like her (229). This moment echoes Sahara's attempts to train Dexter and his siblings to mimic her way of speaking. Just as Sahara compels the children to repeat after her, Suzette feels compelled to copy Maureen's way of speaking in order to fit in with this new white crowd. Suzette sees her verbal transformation as complementary to her physical transformation. Once her hair and makeup is completed, she feels like she looks "like a princess – a little bit darker, but she could pass for one" (230). Because her slightly darker complexion can potentially sabotage her attempt to pass for white, her ability to "talk white" becomes even more important. She thinks that Maureen and Marc have "found the princess inside of her" and rejoices that "The Hanover Park high school girl was gone; she looked years older and good enough to go anywhere" (231). In Suzette's eyes, the young woman who spoke Kaaps slang and lived in Hanover Park was not "good enough" to go to the places that her new career will take her. The new woman Marc and Maureen have made her into, with a "dusting [of] pale powder on her forehead, cheeks and neck," has been transformed in the kind of woman who can "catch a prince...who look[s] like Richard Gere" (233).

Eventually the tragedy of her brother's death and the shame that follows drives Suzette to abandon her family and Hanover Park completely. Though she rejects the community, the rejection is reciprocated by her sister Nicky, who denounces Suzette's "phoney voice" and her "trying for white" (297). Nicky sees Suzette's attempts at assimilating white culture as her turning her back on her family, but Suzette interprets her choice as "reali[sing] that there's a whole world out there," a world where "people don't live like this" (297). Suzette's desire to "outrance the dark skandaal that followed her" in Hanover Park reinforces the connection she makes between the coloured version of herself that resided in Hanover Park and the new white version of herself, which she hopes will be unburdened by history and freed from shame (301). When a neighbour questions the way she speaks of her father on her last day in Hanover Park, Suzette retorts, "I talk how I like," a moment signalling her commitment to using the new voice she has chosen, regardless of the consequences (298). As in Willy Russell's play about class mobility, *Breezblock Park*, "the heroine's potential 'escape' from her class position is achieved only through contempt of her working-class family" (Lawler; 1999:16). To achieve the life she desires, Suzette must turn her back on the past and obliterate the previous version of herself.

At the close of the novel, Suzette and her mother are briefly reunited in 1996 after a decade's separation. Twenty-eight-year-old Suzette is poised, well-dressed, wealthy and famous, and she speaks in flawless standard British English, so much so that her mother notes "you would never say she was from Hanover Park when she opened her mouth" (323). Language remains the key indicator of Suzette's cultural and racial shift. The way she trains herself to speak allows her to smoothly navigate the white world she has chosen. Rossouw's inclusion of this scene provides a reflective and comparative look at Suzette's experiences both pre- and post-1994. Even in the hopeful years following South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, in the new "rainbow nation," Suzette still chooses to live as a white woman. Through her relationship with her white husband, she has also given birth to a white son with "curly blonde hair and fair skin" (320), furthering signalling her absorption into whiteness. Suzette's alignment with whiteness goes from ideological to biological through this partnership. The next generation of Suzette's family will grow up as white children in the new South Africa. If the direction we push our children into signals our hopes for the future, Suzette's choice to raise her son as white indicate that she still believes that the best thing one can be in (the "new") South Africa is white.

Suzette's experience indicates that as Soudien & Botsis suggest, "it is not only the historical proprietors of whiteness that wish to prolong [its] normativity" and that "accent [remains] one of those areas that is esteemed and given value in post-apartheid South Africa" (2011:99). During her unexpected reunion with her mother, Suzette informs her that she plans to start a modelling agency in the predominantly coloured suburb of Athlone to give young coloured women the opportunity to follow in her footsteps. This confuses Magda who believes that in "the new South Africa" Suzette "could live like a white person if she wanted to; Nelson Mandela made it possible when he became president" (324). Rather than seeing Suzette's choice to "return" symbolically to Hanover Park through her modelling agency as positive, Magda sees it as regressive. This moment is a paradox; Suzette has chosen to reclaim her ties to the coloured identity she has spent much of her adult life trying to deny, but only in order to usher other coloured women into whiteness and give them access to the lifestyle she has secured. Modelling agencies and finishing schools have a history as agents of patriarchy and perpetuators of Western standards for "ladylike behaviour," and Suzette's outlook on assimilation indicates that hers will also follow this paradigm. Though Magda does not understand Suzette's decision, so unquestionable is the value she sees in the new life Suzette has built for herself that she does not

challenge Suzette's desire to do for others what she has done for herself. She is proud of her daughter's ability to transgress the colour and class lines that prevented her own success and that of her other children, even if it means they as a family will remain estranged. Suzette's willingness to walk away from her family and community is the key to her success, a key she intends to now bestow on others.

Conclusion

Zadie Smith begins her essay "Speaking in Tongues" (2009) with this:

Hello. This voice I speak with these days, this English voice with its rounded vowels and consonants in more or less the right place—this is not the voice of my childhood. I picked it up in college, along with the unabridged *Clarissa* and a taste for port. Maybe this fact is only what it seems to be—a case of bald social climbing—but at the time I genuinely thought *this* was the voice of lettered people, and that if I didn't have the voice of lettered people I would never truly be lettered. A braver person, perhaps, would have stood firm, teaching her peers a useful lesson by example: not all lettered people need be of the same class, nor speak identically. I went the other way. Partly out of cowardice and a constitutional eagerness to please, but also because I didn't quite see it as a straight swap, of this voice for that.

Smith uses the language of shame to convey her feelings towards her own linguistic shift, signified by the nakedness and exposure of her "bald social climbing" and her wistful envy of "braver" people who might have made other choices, suggesting a sense of her own cowardice. Smith describes her younger self as having had a conflicting relationship to agency, the language she "picks up" along the way seeming like a choice at the time, but one made in a context that threatens exclusion from the world of "lettered people" if she does not obey. Smith reveals how the flexibility she thought she was exercising gave way to an irreversible forfeiture of her previous way of speaking. At first, the twoness she initiated by adding the voice she acquired in Cambridge to the voice of her native Willesden was "like being alive twice," but this ends when she discovers that her newfound Cambridge voice has become "[her] only voice, whether [she] want[s] it or not" (Smith, 2009).

The code-switching Smith initially thinks she is doing proves to be a ruse. The two voices cannot coexist – one must take precedence. Smith points out the way voices signal allegiance and

identity: “we feel that our voices are who we are, and that to have more than one, or to use different versions of a voice for different occasions, represents, at best, a Janus-faced duplicity, and at worst, the loss of our very souls” (2009). Even the “Janus-faced duplicity” that Smith identifies as the best possible interpretation implies deceit, fraud and betrayal. The worst case, invokes the biblical proverb: “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36), making this “choice” a double-edged sword.

Both Rossouw’s and McCaulay’s texts lay bare these tensions. They reveal the ways in which the ability to choose one life or another, one race or another, or one class or another, is overdetermined by external societal conditions as “individuals both internalize and act on the ideologies that underlie their own subordination” (Weitz, 2001:668). Both Suzette and Dexter are ashamed of their humble origins and this shame is intensified in their encounter with people of higher social status. For Dexter, his reality is far beneath the standard he imagines Sahara and the rest of her ilk to uphold. His mother Arleen shares his shame, hiding her reality from Sahara’s outsider gaze: “she don’t want the woman to see that we t’ief light and shit in a hole in the ground out back; she don’t want her to see where we wash, using bucket and rag, standing on a slippery flat rock, she don’t want her to see the cardboard under the zinc roof inside to catch leak” (42). He hopes that behaving more like an “uptown” browning like Sahara will obscure his shame, but his attempts only intensify this shame by compounding it with the shame of falling short of the standard Sahara has set. By trying to improve himself and his standard of living via assimilation and then falling short, he experiences the shame of feeling as though he never “deserved” it in the first place. There is also shame in having abandoned the community he came from in exchange for something thought to be better, of so-called “bald” social climbing, an act that is only rewarded when it is successful. Dexter’s failed attempt to bring himself and his family out of poverty ends with the death of his younger brother, and estrangement and alienation from his family and community. The future he seeks in the rural countryside of Mandeville is insecure, the only surety being his complete aloneness. For Suzette, her shame about her background and desire to leave it behind is so significant, especially after the scandal of her brother’s death, that she severs all ties to Hanover Park. She trades her previous voice for a new, shinier, more commercial one and in return, she is handed the life of her dreams.

While there are features of their subordination that unite them, there are key distinctions between Dexter and Suzette. Though both characters come from a poor background, Dexter is dark skinned and male while Suzette is light-skinned and female. The narratives do not ignore the way these features distinguish the characters. Gender plays a significant role in both of their experiences. For Dexter, his masculinity makes him threatening in a way that Suzette is not. As Sahara points out, “girls [a]re so much easier” to insinuate into the upper echelons of the class hierarchy (especially when they meet the standards of beauty) because they are not considered to be physically intimidating in the way that men are (230). Likewise, Rossouw’s emphasis on Suzette’s appearance signals the ways in which economies of beauty allow women who meet Western standards of beauty to achieve what in most cases other women and men are unable to. This exposes the way constructs of race, colour and class are also gendered. As Mark Hill points out, the impact of skin colour based discrimination in particular has “more bearing” on the lived experiences of women than of men (Hill, 2002:78). This point is reaffirmed by Neal & Wilson who assert that “compared to Black males, Black females have been more profoundly affected by the prejudicial fallout surrounding issues of skin color, facial features, and hair” (1989:328). So while Dexter must contend with controlling images that portray him as either a “brute” or a “sambo”²⁴ for instance, the particular concerns around beauty politics do not apply to him in the same ways as they apply to Suzette. While he does not have the same means of access to escape from his circumstances on the basis of his appearance, it also exempts him from the sorts of physical objectification that Suzette experiences as a woman. Nevertheless, this does not undermine the genuine struggles that men like Dexter experience due to the stereotypes applied to them, it merely highlights the differences between these expectations on the basis of gender, a further complication in these characters’ increasingly intersectional identities.

²⁴ Ronald Hall identifies these two primary stereotypes as the most enduring applied to black men: “The first is the brute. The second is sambo. Both were initially developed by Europeans to secure their position in Western society and simultaneously denigrate Africans for purposes of subordination. The brute defined Africans as primitive, temperamental, violent, and sexually powerful, and the sambo defined them as child-like. The brute stereotype in particular was effective in conveying Africans’ mental dullness and lack of self-control. Europeans and their Western cohorts then validated race, enabling a status hierarchy between Africans and themselves” (Hall, 2001:106). Though Hall is referring specifically the African American context, the similar histories of slavery between the US and the Caribbean give the analysis cross-contextual relevance.

Despite these differences between the two characters on the basis of gender, they both express similar desires to escape the oppression and subordination assigned to people of the same racial and social status. They manipulate their voices to try to achieve this in ways that seem to open up temporary avenues for empowerment. Both Dexter and Suzette at first *seem* to be willingly modifying their voices in the attempt to meet the standard, to “rise to the occasion” presented to them. But as was mentioned earlier, the proscription of choice inherent in relationships rooted in power and oppression complicates this appearance of willingness. Nonetheless, they are exerting the agency available to them to change their circumstances by attempting to negotiate the differences between themselves and their counterparts, but use of the term “negotiation” implies equality between both parties, which does not exist in this case. They are in positions of weakness, and there are not able to “negotiate.” In hierarchical systems of race and class based oppression, one party demands while the other either cooperates or concedes defeat. In Dexter’s case he does both. Suzette’s cooperation can be interpreted as a triumph, but is also tragic because in exchange for her success she turns her back on her family and her community.

As George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion* used Eliza Doolittle to didactically lampoon Britain’s rigid class system of the early 20th century, *What Will People Say?* and *Dog-Heart* use the vehicle of language to expose what is at stake in the tug of war between colour, gender and class. In a purportedly non-racial Jamaica, Dexter and Sahara are ostensibly the same race, “Jamaican,” but their complexions and class affiliation separate them. In her attempt to give him access to opportunities that would have otherwise been withheld from someone of his colour and class in exchange for assimilation, Sahara’s actions suggest that performing brownness through speech and action will give Dexter the “opportunity” to become brown and leave blackness behind, but the text reveals that this is not enough. *Dog-Heart* conveys the fatalistic message that in this rigid matrix of domination, “a man can never escape what him is, what him is born to be” (225). It illustrates the limits of even the imagination to conjure a version of reality where there is the possibility for a boy like Dexter to overcome his circumstances. Sahara’s insistence on reshaping Dexter into the mould of an upper-class “brown” Jamaican also reveals her inability to imagine a way in which someone from his background, speaking the way he does, can carve out a niche for himself in an “uptown” school. Dexter’s presence at Holborn Prep represents the same sort of

hollow “diversity” embodied by the national motto of “out of many, one people” that promises acceptance, but does not extend to genuine or meaningful inclusion.

Contrastingly, *What Will People Say?* seems to be advancing the opposite message through Suzette’s escape into whiteness. But what Suzette loses in the exchange is the true tragedy of the text. She severs her connection to her family and history, and in the act of wholly adopting another voice, she completely silences the other. As Michelle Cliff (1990:272) proposes,

through objectification – the process by which people are dehumanized, made ghostlike, given the status of Other – an image created by the Oppressor replaces the actual being. The actual being is then denied speech; denied self-definition, self-realization; and overall this, denied self-hood – which is after all the point of objectification. A group of human beings – a people – are denied their history, their language, their music. Their cultural values are ignored. This history, this language, this music, these values exist in the sub-culture, but in the dominant culture only certain elements are chosen, recast, co-opted and made available to the definition of these people. And these elements presented by the dominant culture tend to serve the purpose of objectification and, therefore oppression.

This denial of speech is all the more potent in the context of “non-racialism” and “rainbowism.” If parts of the rainbow are silenced, then the dominant voices will continue to construct the narrative, determining what stories are told and in what *accents* these stories are conveyed.

As an alternative to this flattening of accent, Carli Coetzee suggests an “accented future” (2013). Coetzee’s conceptualisation of accent surpasses the denotative meaning, advocating for an understanding of the term ‘accented’ that refers to, “ways of thinking that are aware of the legacies of the past and do not attempt to empty out the conflicts and violence under the surface” (2013:x). The impulse towards the brand of multiculturalism that rainbowism has now been seen to represent as proposed by South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission is in contradiction to Coetzee’s approach because it demands the emptying out of conflicts in favour of a “fresh start.” This urge towards erasure is motivated by the fear that acknowledgement of the legacies of the past will bring to the surface irreconcilable conflict. However, Coetzee’s model advocates for the usefulness of “difference and disagreement” and even discord as a way to destabilise the engrained power structures that continue to marginalise those who do not ascribe to Westernised ways of being and speaking (2013:x). Aiming her proposition especially

at academia, which has proven itself to be especially resistant to transformation and accentedness, Coetzee suggests that we become more comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Through her framework of consciously accented engagement, Coetzee presents an alternative to the unaccented worlds the characters presented in this chapter occupy. The decentring of English that models like Coetzee's call for is destabilising, especially because many of the world's most powerful people have a vested interest in its use. However, that destabilisation is both necessary and all too common for the disempowered; a more accented world will distribute the discomfort more evenly. The concept of accentedness is often rejected due to claims of its impracticality, but these claims do not take into account the consequences, both personal and societal, of "the death and burial" of "local cultural originality" that occurs when one monolithic language obliterates culturally-formed, indigenous languages (Fanon (2008/1967:18)). The extent of the loss our societies have experienced as a result of this refusal to accommodate a more accented world will never be known. However, at this critical juncture of history, steps taken in the direction of a more accented world can begin to liberate the silenced tongue and help to usher in the non-racial future these nations optimistically (but prematurely) claim.

Chapter Two

“Raise her Colour”: Interracial Romance in *Beka Lamb* and *Joonie*

Subjects in societies hierarchically ordered along class lines are taught to assess social status through a variety of markers, including the way someone speaks and dresses, where they live and how they behave. Romantic partners are another key marker of status, especially for women, because they have the power to, for example, turn an actress into a duchess as in the case of Megan Markle. The terms hypergamy and hypogamy illustrate the societal view of marriage as a source of either promotion or demotion of social status. This association between romantic relationships and status is even further complicated when racial difference is involved.

Historically, interracial desire has been heavily policed and legally prohibited through what has been known as “anti-miscegenation” legislation. Whether *de jure* (as in the case of South Africa) or *de facto* (as in the Anglo-Caribbean), the intentions of the anti-miscegenation regulations of the past remained the same—to maintain racial borders and protect white privilege. The regulation of interracial relationships helped to stave off the feared “social and sexual chaos” brought on by increasing numbers of mixed-race individuals, which could potentially destabilise already tenuous racial boundaries (Livesay, 2012:107). Colonial discourses sought to “define interracial sex as a font of contagion” that would undermine white purity and upend the hierarchical system of racialised oppression created by slavery (Newman, 2010:592).

Though much of the focus on the policing of interracial desire has been on social and biological factors, since “Europeans in high office saw white prestige and profits as inextricably linked,” materialist motivations were implicated as well (Stoler, 1989:639). Tyner & Houston point out how concerns regarding racial purity typically used to justify the policing of interracial desire were put in place to serve the ends of capitalism because racial transgression has the potential to “destabilize dominant modes of production” (2000:404). They also argue that, “the criminalization and punishment of interracial sexual relations has historically been grounded in material relations and not, as popular literature and quasi-scientific writings suggest, in abstract ideals of racial purity and fears of racial degeneration” (2000:388). The concerns regarding morality, eugenics and racial allegiance are thus shown to be tools in a larger plan to keep social, political and economic control in white hands.

Inextricably linked to the regulation and enforcement of racial division is the goal of maintaining strict boundaries between social classes. Because of the racist, hierarchical structure of pigmentocratic societies, colour lines inevitably intersect with class lines, meaning that a transgression of one is typically a transgression of both. This inextricable link between colour and class (which is further complicated by gender) makes it such that the pathologisation of interracial desire often overlaps with the pathologisation of class aspiration. In the complex interplay between colour and class, colour becomes the primary factor when class is equal, further entrenching the inequality of non-whites. The pursuit of upward class mobility, especially through vehicles such as romantic pairings (which can appear to some to be an “easy route” to “undeserved” success) are vilified in mainstream culture. According to Diana Paulin (1997:166), these

acts of border-crossing become criminalized because they directly challenge mainstream categories constructed precisely to police boundaries. The disruption of racial categories represents one of the most controversial forms of border-crossing, a "transgression" frequently labeled race trading or half-breeding. The underlying and often blatant articulation of "crossing over" in mainstream society is represented by discourses of disease, contamination, and destruction, fueled by the fear that something sacred, powerful, or pure is in danger of losing its authenticity and effect through miscegenation. Defining interracial relationships as transgressive secures the boundaries of racial identity. It also protects whiteness by policing its borders, insinuating that any intermixing decreases the value, power and purity of this invaluable asset.

Deviant Bodies become Deviant Minds

Towards this end, interracial relationships are often portrayed as deviant in film, literature and popular culture. This trope has a history in racist films and books written to promote segregation such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915), and also recurs in films and books produced by people of colour, often with the aim of undermining discriminatory race relations through inversions of racial stereotypes (such as in Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever* (1991)). A recurring motif in portrayals of interracial romance is inevitable disaster. Characters in interracial relationships are either depicted as doomed star-crossed lovers in a cautionary tale or as either exploitative or coerced non-equals pursuing social advancement or actively rebelling against social norms. The most blatant evidence of this can be seen in the common stereotypes of the slave mistress, the white

man seduced by the lascivious native and the enduring tropes of the tragic mulatto and “jungle fever.”²⁵

In literary depictions, miscegenation and interracial desire is often punished by ostracism, degeneration, madness, or death. One of the key examples of this trope in the South African context is Sarah Gertrude Millin’s *God’s Step-Children*, a racist novel that charts the tragic lives of mixed people over the course of four generations (1924). According to Diana Mafe, Millin’s text is written with a “didactic realism” grounded in “nineteenth-century evolutionary theory and Social Darwinism” that is designed to discourage interracial relationships (2013:41). More recently, Zakes Mda’s scathing criticism of South Africa’s Immorality Act in *The Madonna of Excelsior* shines a light on the hypocrisy of the prohibition and policing of interracial sex by its most zealous perpetrators (2004). In the US, the proliferation of fiction featuring the tragic mulatto archetype indicates the prevalence of this stereotype in both the slavery and pre-Civil Rights movement era. Other notable examples of literature suggesting deleterious consequences for interracial sexual transgression include Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power* (1986) and Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). In both texts, the female main character devolves into a madness presumably inherited from their wayward mothers, whose own madness is partially attributed to interracial mixing with the “natives.” The featuring of the trope of madness in both these well-known texts highlights its centrality in both the South African and Anglo Caribbean contexts.

Despite this, the recurrence of the motif of madness in post-colonial women’s writing remains under-examined, with the focus remaining typically on other factors within the texts. Authors such as Kelly Baker Josephs’ (2013) and Flora Veit-Wild (2006) have begun to excavate this theme and its import in their relative contexts, but the two contexts have yet to be put into conversation with each other on this particular theme. In this chapter I attempt to fill this gap through a comparative analysis of texts from the two regions, highlighting both the similarities

²⁵ In her analysis of Spike Lee’s film *Jungle Fever*, Diana Paulin analyses how the term “jungle fever” “serves to reproduce the notion that interracial desire is transgressive and that it contaminates pure blood lines,” thereby “reinscrib[ing] the notion that interracial love is the result of irrational, racialized, heated passion—which manifests itself as a sickness—confirming the dominant belief that interracial sexual relations are wrong or immoral” (1997:168).

and particularities of representations of the pathologisation of interracial relationships (especially for women of colour). My analysis foregrounds the portrayal of the impact of the controlling images applied to women of colour and the idealisation of the white/European romantic partner. The texts I analyse afford a considerable portion of their storylines to the roles that family and community members play in policing interracial desire. As they transition into the post-colonial/apartheid era, this social pressure supplants the bureaucratic forces historically present in both contexts, and my reading explores the role of family and community as ideological apparatuses in the narratives. My aim is to unpack the political, social and ideological functions of madness, which I contend serves as punishment for the transgression of racial boundaries in the texts.

The seminal text in feminist readings of representations of madness is Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination* (1980). Gilbert & Gubar undertake a recuperative reading of female characters in Victorian literature such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Following Gilbert and Gubar's model, many critics have read madness in women's writing as a subversive form of protest against the stringent restrictions women encounter in patriarchal societies. Marta Caminero-Santangelo argues against this model, proposing that rather than liberating and empowering women, such an argument strengthens the dichotomous, essentialist thinking that connects masculinity with rationality and femininity with irrationality (1998). This is especially the case for women of colour, who must contend with stereotypes and controlling images that depict them as more animalistic, irrational and angry than their white female counterparts.²⁶ Caminero-Santangelo presents an expansive overview of the varying critical perspectives on madness, which has been seen as a form of protest against women's roles, though many scholars, including Caminero-Santangelo, argue that such protest is ineffective. Caminero-Santangelo points out that as in the case of anorexia nervosa, a disorder associated with women's desire to control their own lives

²⁶ In the Caribbean and American contexts, these "madwomen" in literature have often been creole or mixed women (with Jean Rhys *Wide Sargasso Sea* being one of the most well-known examples) (1966). The frequent portrayal of mixed and creole women as mentally unstable suggests a preoccupation with maintaining racial boundaries by disciplining transgression.

and circumstances, this form of protest works against the intended aim, rendering the woman more powerless and alienated as a result (1998:3).

In her exposition of the use of madness in Caribbean Literature, Kelly Baker Josephs describes madness as definitive: it “defines community, defines gender, defines the form of the text, and for some characters, defines reality itself” (2013:9). Madness sets boundaries by delineating what constitutes “sane and acceptable” behaviour, relegating all unapproved acts as beyond the realm of sanity. It is also a form of punishment; transgressive behaviour is punished by psychological and societal alienation. Caminero-Santangelo points out that madness, along with violence, are “contributions to a dominant order,” providing “the illusion of power while locating the mad (non)subject outside any sphere where power can be exerted” (1998:4). Therefore, she proposes that “the association of madness with femininity is represented as the product of an entire set of discursive practices” or “‘technologies’ engaged in the production of gendered (as well as racial and/or ethnic) subjectivity” (1998:11). As pairing madness and irrationality with womanhood disciplines the female subject, punishing interracial romance with madness disciplines the racialised subject. It renders cross-racial relations not only taboo but dangerous, further ingraining the status quo.

This task of disciplinary subject formation is accomplished through the deployment of a variety of social influences. In the absence of the imposition of repressive state apparatuses to enforce the regulation of transgressive desire, ideological state apparatuses, such as family members, educational authorities and community members, fill that role. Often family members are unconsciously working to uphold the status quo as they instruct their offspring on how to negotiate systems designed to disadvantage them. Emphasising protection instead of control, their professed intention differs from that of the formal state-based structures they support, though the outcome is the same.

Introducing the texts

Rayda Jacobs *Joonie* (2011) and Zee Edgell’s *Beka Lamb* (1982) are both explorations of the ways in which families and society police and discipline interracial desire, transmitting and

enforcing racial ideology that discourages romance deemed transgressive. Both texts are postcolonial feminist reworkings of the bildungsroman genre,²⁷ as they recount the coming of age of two young women during important times in the histories of their nations.

Joonie tells the story of a young coloured woman confined by apartheid's racist system and its prescriptive control over her romantic, social, and professional prospects. Published in 2011, the novel follows the main character from the late 1970s into post-apartheid South Africa. The plot centres on Joonie's teenage pregnancy and her subsequent move to the US to live with a family member for the duration of her pregnancy. Her choice to move is largely motivated by the shame and heartbreak of being abandoned by her white boyfriend while unbeknownst to him, she is pregnant with his child. While in the United States, Joonie discovers that the woman she believes to be her mentally unstable aunt is actually her mother, who conceived her with a white man. Joonie also engages in another interracial relationship with a white man in the US that ends in tragedy. The retrospective portrayal of interracial romance during apartheid's most repressive period, juxtaposed against a similar relationship in post-Civil Rights America, provides fertile ground for analysis of the various factors implicated in colour and class border-crossing.

Edgell's *Beka Lamb* chronicles seven pivotal months in the fourteenth year of the life of the main character, Beka. It centres on Beka's experiences as a teenage Creole girl living in Belize City in 1950, an important year in the formation of Belize's nationhood and Beka's subjecthood. Published a year after Belize gained its independence in 1981, *Beka Lamb* has been referred to as Belize's "first" novel, as the racial and social impact of the nation's transition from a British colony to an independent nation is a dominant feature of the text, foregrounded by the political involvement of Beka's grandmother, Granny Ivy (Hunter, 1982). The novel is written as an elegy for Beka's friend Toycie, who has been tragically killed in a hurricane after suffering a miscarriage and devolving into madness when she is rejected by her "pania" lover Emilio. Richard Francis Patteson explains that in Belize the term "pania" typically refers to "hispanics, chiefly mestizos, originally from Mexico and Guatemala," and relationships between panias like

²⁷ Heather Smyth's article "'She Had Made a Beginning Too': Beka Lamb and the Caribbean Feminist Bildungsroman" provides an illuminating excavation of the bildungsroman genre and how postcolonial feminist texts counter and transform the genre (2011).

Emilio and creoles like Toyocie are often frowned upon in Belizean culture (1998: 60). Beka's observation of the foreclosure of Toyocie's future occasioned by Emilio's rejection changes her attitude towards her community and her nation and inspires her decision to leave Belize for a "far away corner" of the world (147). Edgell foregrounds Belize's complex racial hierarchy through Toyocie's relationship with Emilio and the communal response to her pregnancy, exposing the inequalities Belize will have to reconcile in the post-independence era.

Like the societies they depict, both novels are preoccupied with skin colour and race. Similar to the position of coloured people in apartheid South Africa's tripartite racial hierarchy, Belize's creole population occupy a liminal social position. The Belizean pre-independence racial hierarchy privileged white expatriates and panias above creoles, and creoles above black and indigenous people. Occupants of this liminal position can 'buy' access to a limited measure of increased privilege by exchanging the various currencies of whiteness. These include obeying the rules of respectability politics, appropriating Western culture and standards of beauty and eschewing affiliation with African and indigenous culture.

Though the disavowal of African and indigenous culture comes with benefits in societies that privilege whiteness, it also has powerful emotional and psychological consequences. In the texts, this disavowal is interpreted either as disloyal, self-interested betrayal or as transgressive destabilisation of the racial hierarchy on which the societies are based. Behaviour that is interpreted as racial and/or social class disloyalty is punished from both ends of the racial spectrum, both inter and intra-racially. When members of the same racial group and social class interpret aspirational inclinations as a form of rejection, they work to sabotage these aspirations. Alternatively, members of a higher class or more esteemed race perceive this behaviour as a threat to their own social position and often attempt to subdue such attempts. In their role as agents of social interpellation, family members play a vital role in providing Beka, Toyocie and Joonie with instruction on how to process these competing influences on their road to adulthood.

When read alongside each other, the many similarities between the texts provide fertile ground for the unearthing of the legacies of familial and societal policing of racial transgression. Both Edgell and Jacobs explore the topic of interracial desire with a particular sensitivity to the

intersectional concerns of gender, race, colour and class. The young female characters in both texts are portrayed as reaching towards whiteness, attempting to raise their status through romantic relationships with men who are more highly regarded in society. Contrary to the advantageous expected end, these attempts have deleterious consequences ranging from expulsion from school and society to physical and sexual abuse, madness and death. Through these unfortunate circumstances, Edgell and Jacobs affirm many of the stereotypes associated with interracial relationships. Though the characters in their texts are not “mixed” in the way typically associated with tragic mulattoes, they suffer greatly for the racial disloyalty represented by their choice to date white men. Their decisions to become involved with these men also appear to be motivated by the pursuit of economic and social advancement. There is however, a considerable amount of mutual affection displayed, an important factor that counteracts the stereotypical assumption that such relationships are solely exploitative. Furthermore, because of the disintegration of the women’s lives following their romantic encounter with whiteness, the portrayals can be interpreted as an inversion of the enduring equation of whiteness with purity, instead rewriting it as a corrupting influence leading to destruction.

The uncanny similarities between the portrayals of hypergamy and the resultant outcomes in the texts warrant an investigation of the motives for the pursuit of interracial romance in the novels, and an in-depth analysis of what can be gleaned from the author's choices to portray madness and death as the ultimate end of these relationships. Furthermore, keeping in mind the contention between Caminero-Santangelo’s viewpoint and Gilbert and Grubar’s critically lauded argument, I am interested in exploring if the condition of madness is portrayed as a site of power, revolution and resistance in these contexts. I take my cue from Kelly Baker Josephs in that rather than examining the representation of madness on its own or the psychological implications of the forms of madness represented, I will analyse the *function* madness serves in the texts, especially in the pivotal context of suspended independence and democracy (2013).

The Political as Personal

Simmering in the backgrounds of both *Joonie* and *Beka Lamb* is the racially charged political tensions of their time. Jacobs makes the curious choice of limiting explicit reference to apartheid

in her novel, which is a curious choice for a book set in 1978, only two years after the Soweto uprising. The dearth of overt references to apartheid legislation is all the more glaring because the book foregrounds interracial romance, the prohibition of which was a cornerstone of apartheid philosophy. Because of its insidious and all-encompassing nature, even when not explicitly indicated as the driving force, the controlling hand of apartheid's repressive ideology is made manifest in almost every interaction. As Kopano Ratele points out, "the laws of apartheid intended to carnalise racist prejudice, to transmit prejudice into, as it were, the respiratory, reproductive and neurological systems of individual Africans and whites" (2009:291). In their comprehensive essay on the particularities and implications of apartheid anti-miscegenation legislation, Rebecca Sherman & Melissa Steyn illustrate the ways in which prohibiting racial mixing helped to cement the power of the National Party and secure the venerated "pure" white race it sought to empower and protect (2009). One of the main goals of apartheid's anti-miscegenation law, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, was to "close the membership of the ruling group," making it impossible to "become" white, a concern that applied especially to the coloured population, some members of which bore a racially ambiguous phenotype that could pass for white. "The Act aimed to erect a barrier against [coloured] race mobility," cementing their placement as second-class citizens in the racial hierarchy regardless of appearance or partial European ancestry (Sherman & Steyn, 2009:65). The Immorality Act (No. 21 of 1950), which specifically targeted "illicit relations" between whites and coloureds, followed shortly thereafter (Sherman & Steyn, 2009:65).

These laws, along with apartheid's other two key pieces of legislation, the Population registration Act (No. 30 of 1950) and the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950), conspired to reinforce the basic tenets of apartheid's segregationist, white supremacist regime. The Population registration Act (No. 30 of 1950) required the classification of every South African into one of four racial categories, and the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950) prohibited residential integration. The Group Areas Act targeted areas like District Six and Sophiatown in particular, which were multiracial urban cities that stood as examples of what the apartheid government insisted should not, and *could* not exist. As such, they were destroyed and their inhabitants relocated to racially segregated townships to prevent integration and race-mixing. The lengths to which the apartheid government went to separate members of different racial groups and

villainise racial integration indicates the extent of its fear of what a racially integrated community might give birth to.

These laws infringed on the sanctity of the personal and domestic domain, making the political extremely personal. As Sherman & Steyn (2009:66) illustrate, apartheid's laws allowed for intrusions on the private domain that included inhumane measures implemented to mandate compliance:

Many suffered humiliation, lack of privacy, and degradation by the police. Authorities frequently followed people suspected of interracial sex. Police raided homes in the early hours of the morning to examine identity documents to ensure that sleeping partners were of the same race... Those accused of violating the laws faced formal penalties and harsh jail terms.

Ratele further points out that “anyone who believed and behaved differently from the lawmakers in South Africa from the 1950s until the mid-1980s, when the law was repealed, had to change their minds, keep quiet, learn to hide, quit the country or be jailed” (2009:295). Remarkably, none of this invasion on the private domain by official forces is apparent in Jacobs' novel, as Joonie carries on her relationship with her white lover Blair without any legal implications while in South Africa. However, as Jacobson et al. point out, the power of societal pressure rivalled the potential of legal sanctions: apartheid's “mixed couples faced rejection by their families, friends and community” (2004:444). Though there is no intervention by repressive state apparatuses, the significant resistance the couple receives from their families and community, the two primary ideological state apparatuses who disapprove of their union, is effective in derailing their budding romance.

The regulation of interracial romance in Edgell's *Beka Lamb* occurs entirely in the realm of the interpersonal, without the looming interference of repressive state apparatuses. The novel's narrator describes Belize City, the setting of the novel, as “a relatively tolerant town where at least six races with their roots in other districts of the country, in Africa, the West Indies, Central America, Europe, North America, Asia, and other places lived in a kind of harmony” (11). This social harmony, however, relies on adherence to colorist rules of behaviour that govern the citizen's private and public lives. Transgression of this racialised code of conduct threatens to destabilise the precarious harmony of the racially mixed but deeply hierarchical society.

In the text, Edgell (11) uses the metaphor of logwood, one of Belize's key exports, to depict the racial makeup of Belize City:

In three centuries, miscegenation, like logwood, had produced all shades of black and brown, not grey or purple or violet, but certainly there were a few people in town known as red ibos. Creole regarded as a language to be proud of by most people in the country, served as a means of communication amongst the races. Still, in the town and in the country, as people will do everywhere, each race held varying degrees of prejudice concerning the others.

Though the varying races in Belize discriminate against each other, the unsanctioned practice of miscegenation is rife. Like logwood, it is endemic to Belize's social environment. The novel's storyline challenges the concept that interracial desire is accepted however, revealing that like Belize's valuable ecological resource, it is not allowed to flourish unabused. Nonetheless, the various races are able to coexist alongside one another, often mixing in academic and professional settings, as long as the barriers between the races remain secure. For example, in Beka's classroom "almost every one [is] a different shade of brown, black or white" (88). Their social and private interactions however, such as social clubs and churches, remain segregated.

Though the creole dialect is identified as an equaliser amongst the people, the ability to speak Spanish fluently is viewed as a marker of higher social standing and class (as will later be shown using the example of Emilio Villanueva's pania mother, who uses her linguistic flexibility to borrow the elevated status associated with European aristocracy). Furthermore, "The more you left behind the old ways, the more acceptable you were to the powerful people in the government and the churches who had the power to change a black person's life" (70). 'The old ways,' refers to the indigenous traditions of the native Carib people of Belize, whose culture is denigrated in favour of European colonial culture. As Heather Smyth points out, "The distance between Carib and Creole, supported by stereotypes (such as Creole suspicions that Caribs practice Obeah and sacrifice children), belies the common African heritage of both but exists, argues Beka's mother, because Creole people left Carib ways behind to gain social power" (197). This tenuous relationship between Creoles and Caribs and the fine line of separation between them requires creole families like the Lambs to work harder academically, professionally and socially to set themselves apart and secure their privilege. The families who do flourish in the colonial economy of pre-independence Belize are those who are "shareholders of the British Lumber Company," the allegiance of whom lies with the white, European minority (8).

Edgell sets the tone for the colorist hierarchy she highlights in the novel by emphasising that the Lamb family manages to maintain a middle-class standard of living because of her father's employment by "Blanco's Import Commission Agency" (8). As a creole family, the Lambs are less well off than their mestizo counterparts, and even less so than white British colonisers and other European expatriates. Mr. Blanco owns many of the businesses in the town, including the local movie theatre, and his family is one of two "in the colony that Beka both envied and admired" (51). When the Lamb family shares a vacation home with the Blancos during the school holidays, Beka yearns to be granted insight into the inner workings of their wealth and status, but "as is often the case, wealth, class, colour and mutual shyness, kept the children of the two families apart, although they occupied the top and the bottom of the same house" (51). The text reveals the subjugation of the Lambs to the elevated Blanco family, whose wealth and status is exemplified in their occupation of the upper floors of the vacation home the families share. The concept of the Lambs and the Blancos as mutual residents of the same home extends the national metaphor of all citizens functioning as separate but unequal members of the same body (Smyth, 2011:197).

The Blancos' light skin and wealth secures their position at the top of the physical and social hierarchy, served by their Mayan servant, while the Lambs are relegated to an inferior position. This arrangement reflects the racially hierarchical social structure of Belize inherited from colonialism. As Nancy Lundgren reveals, "although formal colonization does not exist in Belize today, it continues to function in the form of a complex and multilevel socialization process, which serves to reinforce and perpetuate colonial and neo-colonial unequal relations of power and an ideology of European superiority" (Lundgren, 1992:86). Edgell drives this point home through the juxtaposition of the surnames of the two families, with the word 'Blanco,' Spanish for white, invoking the connotations of whiteness (purity, righteousness etc.) and 'Lamb' implying docility. The Blanco family patriarch is notably described as having "achieved a status not unlike a Maya deity — raining blessings upon his employees as long as the rituals were ceremoniously enacted, the sacrifices offered, and the commandments obeyed" (51). As a representative of the upper echelon of Belizean society, Mr. Blanco serves as a controlling force whose wealth represents the unattainable. His elevation to the status of a deity indicates that both

he and the lifestyle he represents are worshipped by the local people, so much so that he supplants the local Mayan deities. To support and affirm his position as a deity, Mr. Blanco maintains the position of “giver,” while his followers only receive. This unidirectional relationship of giving and receiving mirrors the relationship created between “developed” and “underdeveloped” countries through the process of distributing development aid and resources; being placed in the role of “receiver” positions underdeveloped countries as vulnerable, dependent and impotent, further empowering the developing nations and reifying the dichotomy between the two. Similarly, Mr. Blanco’s “worshippers” waiting with outstretched hands for the blessings he will bestow on them are positioned as weak and helpless by comparison. This empowers him to demand that the “rituals” of obedience and compliance are enacted and his “commandments” are obeyed. These requirements leave no space to challenge Mr. Blanco’s right to be at the top of the social and racial hierarchy – doing so puts one at risk of having the blessings he bestows revoked. The character of Mr. Blanco symbolises the capitalist, colorist and classist hierarchy enshrined as de facto law in Belize, which demands sacrifices of its citizens and punishes disobedience. People like Beka’s father Bill Lamb remain oblivious of the ways in which Mr. Blanco’s deification reinforces their own subjugation. Instead, Beka’s father admires Mr. Blanco and serves him diligently: “He was the kind of man that inspired the devotion of people like [Bill Lamb] who looked on him as a model of what a man could do through hard work” (51). As a model citizen, Bill Lamb obeys Mr. Blanco’s commandments, thereby evidencing his willingness to uphold the rules of Belize’s racial hierarchy.

While Edgell primarily uses the voice of the narrator to reveal how characters of different races relate to and perceive each other, Jacobs relies more on character dialogue to expose the characters’ perceptions of race and colour. Early on in the text, it is revealed that Joonie’s belief in the superiority of whiteness is inherited from her parents. One of Joonie’s earliest memories is of a whispered conversation she overhears between her parents in which her father, smitten with Joonie’s beauty as a child, asks her mother “She’s really my child, Merle?... Look at me. My hair’s hardened from cement. I’m dark. There’s nothing coloured about this child” (2). Her father associates coloured identity with “hard” hair and dark skin, so Joonie’s light complexion and straight hair, which is referred to as “beautiful” (27) and “silky” (25) at various points throughout the text, indicate to him that she is more white than coloured, which he sees as a favourable trait.

Joonie's father's comparison of his daughter's complexion with his own evidences the way "standards of beauty that privilege whiteness can only function by degrading Blackness. Identity is relational, and those who are defined as beautiful are only defined as beautiful in relation to other women [and men] who are defined as ugly" (Hunter, 2002:178). Furthermore, this moment in the text is later proven to be more complex than it appears at first, when it is revealed that Joonie's parents adopted her from her aunt when she was five days old. Since her father has always been aware that Joonie is not his biological child, his disbelief at her appearance and the fact that she is "really [his] child," indicates that he is astounded at his good fortune for being given a near-white child, even by surrogate.

This preference for European features, especially in terms of romantic pairings, is further emphasised by a conversation between Joonie and her friend Elaine about Elaine's older boyfriend (164-165):

"Wow. Your parents don't mind you dating someone that age?"
'He's going to be a doctor, right? That's a big prize.'
'True,' she laughed. "Parents want looks, colour and money. A doctor's high on the list.'
'Don't forget hair. Heaven forbid you come home with someone with tight hair.'
'It depends how tight.'
'There're degrees of tightness?'
'Oh yes. If a girl child has ten little plaits and bows in her hair, that's tight. If you can't separate the hair to put in a bow, that's tight with no hope."

The seamless flow of the conversation does not distinguish between the speakers, obscuring whether the stated opinions belong to Joonie or Elaine. This is of little importance however, because Elaine and Joonie's comments make clear that they are both patently aware that wealth alone does not convey status; wealth in conjunction with markers of whiteness is the ultimate prize. The girls' conversation reveals that the measure of "hope" one can expect to have for a successful future can be measured by hair texture. According to Mercer, 'black people's hair has been historically devalued as the most visible stigmata of blackness, second only to skin' (cited in Erasmus 2000:381). As such, looser curls, which can be more easily straightened into an "acceptable" hairstyle to conform to European beauty standards, increases one's prospects. Tightly curled, kinky hair, on the other hand, is deemed hopeless because no matter how much it is straightened it will never meet the standards of the European beauty ideal. This emphasises the way "the ideology of beauty is used to organize women into a "beauty queue" where the pigment of one's skin and the texture of one's hair determines how socially desirable one is in the

marriage or dating market” (Hunter, 2002:178). This conversation echoes similar sentiments expressed in a short story by South African author Zoe Wicomb entitled “Friends and Goffels,” in which two young women reflect on the belief circulating in the coloured community about which features are considered to be “acceptable,” which they call the “indexes of worth amongst coloureds” (2011:103).

Notably, neither Joonie nor Elaine claim the opinions they express as their own, but rather ascribe it to their parents, revealing that their pursuit of partners that may facilitate elevation of status is inculcated by values taught to them by their parents. In her analysis of the similar rhetoric used in hair straightener advertisements in South African beauty magazines, Nadia Sanger makes the astute observation that “the racist message being sent to black girls and women is that their unsightly hair is unnecessary and unappealing, and in need of discipline” (Sanger, 2009:143). Both Joonie and Elaine are coloured women encouraged to eschew the “stigmata” of blackness associated with dark skin and tightly coiled, kinky hair, in favour of “Skin color and features associated with whites, such as light skin, straight noses, and long, straight hair, [which] take on the meanings that they represent: civility, rationality, and beauty” (Hunter, 2013:3).

This privileging of white features, especially hair texture, is reiterated numerous times throughout the text. Joonie’s mother has “a thing about colour and hair” and is described as the quintessential British subject (23):

[She was] a follower of royal events and even wore her hair in the same style as the Queen. She knew every published detail of life at Buckingham palace...She had Queen stories, Princess Margaret stories, and had told the story numerous times of how as a young girl she had stood with Ma in the street waiting for the Queen Mother and the young princesses to pass them in her carriage when the royal family visited Cape Town in 1947, and how the Queen Mother had looked at her and smiled.

Most citizens of formerly colonised countries can recall similar stories of enacting rituals meant to mimic the royal family, listening to programs on the radio or watching television broadcasts of the Queen’s speeches, and following every detail about the royal family as though they were celebrities. Similar to Beka’s father’s reverence of Mr. Blanco, Joonie’s mother Merle’s memories of the Queen Mother take on a nostalgic tone of worship. She has imbibed a sense of reverence for the royal family, affirmed presumably by her own mother’s respect and admiration for them. Her desire for the Queen Mother’s approval is satisfied by her perception that the

Queen Mother looked at her and smiled. This thought fills her with such validation and joy that she is able to recall it decades later. Merle's preoccupation with the royal family, even to the point of mimicking the Queen's hairstyle, indicates that she views them as the epitome of class, culture and taste.

Beka's mother Lilla shares Merle's investment in and preoccupation with British culture. Lilla's father is described as an "old half-bakra[1] man" (41). He is an Anglophile who claims to have "a feel" for England, even though he has never been there (41). Lilla inherits her father's love for all things English, as evidenced by her preoccupation with the English roses in her garden, which she has chosen to cultivate rather than the more common local bougainvillea, crotons and hibiscus that thrive in Belize's climate. Instead, she is determined to grow roses that are "like those she saw in magazines which arrived in the colony three months late from England" (9). As Heather Smyth points out, there is an "obvious connection between Beka and the bougainvillea tree that she plants" (2011:192). The growth trajectory of the plant mirrors Beka's personal development, and its use as a metaphor for Beka's nature is emphasised when her father says she is "growing wild like that bougainvillea that's breaking down Miss Boysie's fence. All flash and no substance" (24). Lilla's choice to eschew the local bougainvillea plant growing wild like her daughter in favour of cultivating what she considers to be a more cultured British rose reflects her parenting style. She enrolls Beka in St. Cecilia's, a British convent school, in the hope that this will spur Beka in the direction of British culture, the path that seems most likely to guarantee her access to opportunity in the future.

Both Lilla and Merle's preoccupation with England reveals not only the similarities of their time periods and the concerns of their generation, but also the reach, extent and impact of the imperial project on these colonial subjects. Their veneration of British culture takes the form of intense interest and mimicry, with both women holding the British standard as their ideal. In Lilla's case, this is supported by a study of the socialisation of Belizean children in which Nancy Lundgren asserts: "The covert messages in Belize include an ideology that simultaneously denies the Belizean reality as it provides a norm of Western, White, Christian life" (1992:92). This is further exacerbated by the heavy-handed approach to cultural imperialism enacted by the British imperialists in their attempt to anglicise Belize. According to Caiger, as the British wrested

control of Belize from its previous Spanish colonisers in the 16th and 17th centuries, they made an ardent attempt "to wipe out all memory of Spanish pretensions, and to encourage exclusively the British way of life" (cited in Lundgren, 1992:100). Lilla's outlook reveals evidence of this heavy-handed approach, as she, like Merle, idealises Britishness as the standard to which she and her family ought to aspire.

In the same way that Lilla places Beka in the British Convent School for a better education, Aunt Eila, a local woman in the neighbourhood, enrolls her niece Toycie so that she might have a better chance of escaping poverty. Toycie becomes Beka's best friend, and the two girls are juxtaposed against each other as foils in the novel, with Toycie acting as Beka's slightly older, more mature and studious counterpart. Though Beka and Toycie are both "different on the street where economic necessity forced many creole girls to leave school after elementary education to help at home, work in shops and stores as salesladies or take jobs as domestic servants in the houses of those who could afford such help," Toycie's family is much poorer than Beka's (34). Toycie was taken in by her aunt Eila as a child after her mother moved to the US and according to Beka, "the Qualos were very poor, and there was no romance in it" (98). Toycie and Miss Eila live in a home Beka compares to a "dawg siddown' or lean-to" (32). Toycie's poverty is compounded by her "cinnamon" coloured skin in a nation where black women are barred from most positions, including working as bank tellers (33). Toycie is ambitious, yearning for a house "right da seafront" in a context in which the only possible avenues to such luxury are academic excellence or hypergamy (15). The outlook of Toycie's romance-free impoverished life is brightened by her relationship with Emilio Villanueva, a pania from a distinguished and well-known family. In response to Toycie's relationship with Emilio, Granny Ivy cautions Beka that "Toycie [is] trying to raise her colour, and [will] wind up with a baby instead of a diploma, if she [isn't] careful" (47). Granny Ivy assumes that Toycie is involved with Emilio primarily because a relationship with him can potentially raise her social status by "raising her colour," whereas the basis of the relationship on his end is solely sexual. It should not be overlooked that the directional phrase "raise" used in reference to the change in Toycie's colour implies upward mobility, which is linked to both class and colour. Granny Ivy assumes that the relationship will end in disaster for Toycie and that she will end up bearing the burden of a child on her own. The projected end of the relationship in Granny Ivy's eyes is the exact opposite of what she believes

to be Toycie's intention; Granny Ivy foresees a forfeit of opportunity rather than the abundance Toycie hopes for because becoming pregnant will prevent Toycie from completing her education. Granny Ivy's knowledge of the possible future ahead for young women who engage in interracial and interclass relationships is personal because the same fate she forewarns them about has befallen her. She informs Beka that the reason she was not able to pursue her own personal goals is because "Toycie's first trouble caught [her] too, and [she] turned to rocking the cradle" (170). Beka reproduces this warning and propagates her Grandmother's perception by warning her friend: "Panias scarcely ever marry creole like we, Toycie" (47). Toycie's response to this warning is indifference, but both literally and metaphorically, the seed has been planted. Toycie becomes pregnant with Emilio's child, and the ensuing series of events lead to her eventual demise.

The circumstances of Toycie and Emilio's relationship bear many similarities to Joonie's experience with her white boyfriend Blair. Though Joonie's repeated choice of white, male romantic partners appears to be coincidental, closer inspection reveals that her choices are also informed by the heightened value ascribed to white features and identity. When she first meets Blair, he is surrounded by other men, all of whom are coloured. Joonie ignores the other young men and immediately fixates on Blair, the only white male in the group. She likens his appearance to the American actor Dennis Hopper, indicating the additional measure of glamour she ascribes to Blair because of his whiteness. One of the other coloured men in the group affirms Joonie's perception of Blair as more attractive by first introducing himself, and then pointing out Blair, identifying him as the one with "kwaai hair" (22). This is yet another instance when hair is used within the text as a marker of difference between coloured and white, and especially as a trait that indicates increased beauty and attractiveness. Observing Blair, Joonie notes that "He had that same nervous edge as Hopper and looked like someone right out of the movies, and she liked movies. Her favourite all-time bad boy was Jack Nicholson in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*" (22). Because coloured people have historically been underrepresented in film and television, Blair's whiteness invokes comparisons to white film stars that the other coloured men he is with do not. By nature of his association with the larger, international promotion of whiteness and white identity, Blair invokes the memory and awe of Hollywood films stars like Hopper and Nicholson. Joonie's initial perception and awe of Blair is undeniably

rooted in the additional value he holds because of his whiteness, a point that is driven home by her declaration to her aunt Verne: “He’s a white boy, Verne. He made me feel good about myself” (82). Joonie is similarly attracted to the wealth, class and European appearance of Stavros, the Greek man she becomes engaged to when she moves to the US. When Stavros first expresses interest in Joonie, she thinks (109):

No boy would be interested in a girl in her situation, and she wasn’t used to boys like him. Stavros and she came from different backgrounds. Even Blair, who was white, had something in common with her - the culture and history of their country; they came from the same environment, they spoke the same language. Stavros was Greek, he was an American, a budding journalist, drove a Mustang - a car she’d only seen in the movies. He came from a wealthy family and she from a working-class family. She was outclassed by him, and with her big belly, out of consideration as a girlfriend.

Her appraisal of Stavros is based on the class difference between them and her low status as a pregnant teen immigrant, compared to his prestige as a wealthy American citizen of European heritage. Seen in this light, winning Stavros’ affection becomes about more than a teenage love affair, but about being deemed “worthy” of the interest of someone like him. As her relationship with Stavros develops, she learns that he is controlling, demanding and possessive, but she does not leave him. When Stavros beats her for how she behaves in front of his family, she acknowledges that she does not deserve the beating, but nonetheless takes some measure of blame for “open[ing] her big mouth in front of his family and allow[ing] her Maitland²⁸ manners to come out” (154). Her negative self-appraisal reveals her view of herself as lower than Stavros, whose whiteness and upper-class status makes him superior to her.

Their communities play a significant role in informing the girls’ sense of self-worth in relation to their lighter skinned romantic partners. The conflicting messages Lilla and Merle convey through their emulation and idealisation of whiteness filters into the girls’ own self-evaluations.

Additionally, Granny Ivy encourages Beka to excel in school, but constantly reminds her that all the academic “prizes would go to bakras, panias or expatriates” (1). Joonie’s parents discourage her from dating Blair because he is white, but encourage her to seek out the lightest possible coloured man with straight or loosely curled hair and place her in a white school because of the higher quality of the education. Joonie reads this contradiction as hypocrisy, especially because of her mother’s secret delight over her relationship with Blair.

²⁸ Maitland is a suburb in Cape Town that has historically been considered to be a lower income area.

The familial and communal response to the girls' interracial relationships brings to the surface an irreconcilable conflict. In both contexts, attainment of the white, European ideal to which they aspire is impossible, either through hard work or marriage, and even the aspiration reaffirms their inferiority. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the romantic encounter, wherein the vulnerabilities of love make one most open to rejection. Characters like Granny Ivy and Bill Lamb and Joonie's parents attempt to protect and insulate the girls from this rejection by erecting boundaries. Bill Lamb categorises behaviour he interprets as racial transgression (such as putting on the clothing, accent, or hairstyle associated with a higher class) as "artificiality and sham" and maintains that his family "is in a different class from the [white] Blancos and the Hartleys... [and] he was quite satisfied to remain in the class where he was comfortable" (21). Bill Lamb's and Granny Ivy's admonitions discipline Beka and Toychie to stay within the boundaries of their race and class, encouraging them not to aspire to or attempt to achieve that which is reserved for races and classes above them. Despite the differences in circumstance, both Beka and Joonie's families have strikingly similar outlooks. In the Lambs' case, there is no indication of the fear of political or legal interference. However, the fear of the backlash of their community, which demands humility and allegiance, is their primary motivating factor. For Joonie's family, the looming terror of the apartheid regime remains unmentioned, but remains a silent threat. Nonetheless in both cases, the onus of responsibility rests on the family structure to discipline and interpellate the girls into "appropriate" behaviour.

Notably, it is the female characters in the novels who most heavily bear this burden. This draws attention to the ways gender intersects with colour and class in regards to the reaction to and punishment of racial sexual transgression. As child-bearers, women bear the mark of sexual transgression corporeally in a way that the equally implicated fathers of their children do not. Therefore, the policing of sexual behaviour manifests differently for women than it does for men, as young women are at risk of becoming pregnant and having that pregnancy viewed as a source of dishonour for their families and a derailment of their futures. Kathryn Sloan points out that during the colonial era, childbirth as a result of marriage to a suitable partner bestowed honour in the eyes of the community, while illegitimate pregnancy did the opposite (2011). This "line between honor and shame" is "fragile," and women serve a vital role in instructing their children

on how to navigate the complicated social codes governing marriage and procreation (Sloan, 2011:18). As mother figures, women take on the role of interpellating younger women as not only social subjects, but also as sexual subjects. The transgressions of the young women in their care therefore represents a failure on their part to effectively convey the information necessary to regulate and correct transgressive behaviour. This extends to the mothers of the men involved as well, as they work to contain their sons' passions, allowing for a certain amount of sexual dalliance but preventing formalisation of such relationships through marriage. As guardians of their family's respectability (a responsibility that is applied in particular ways to female identity) in the eyes of society, these women also bear the role of preventing the social catastrophe of hypogamy (Skeggs, 1997). For example, in *Joonie*, Stavros' mother implies that no woman will ever be good enough for her son in her sight, but when he begins courting Joonie she immediately finds a Greek woman to replace her. Similarly, when Joonie begins her relationship with Blair, her mother's warning that "white boys like coloured girls, but they don't marry them" (28) echoes Granny Ivy's prophecy that Toycie "would wind up with a baby instead of a diploma" (47). Both warnings prove true, as Toycie is abandoned while pregnant and expelled, and despite Joonie's two relationships with white men, their promises of engagement are fruitless and neither relationship is legitimised by marriage.

Granny Ivy's warning to Toycie is confirmed by the reaction she receives from Emilio's mother, Senora Villanueva. When Toycie comes to meet them at their church to inform them of her pregnancy, the encounter throws into sharp relief the socioeconomic differences between the two families. Emilio is described as having "long lashes brushing smooth olive cheeks" and his mother is "dressed exquisitely in a sheath fashioned of sharkskin material. Her tan patent leather shoes matched her dress, and the glass beads of her rosary sparkled like crystal" (102).

Comparatively, though Toycie is wearing a "Sunday dress" (101), when juxtaposed with the Villanuevas (102), she

appeared a trifle scruffy in her lavender, waterwave taffeta dress with its overskirt of billowing lavender bobbinet. Unravelling to one side, her frock tail drooped around her calves. Shoe whitening smeared Toycie's brown ankles, and her worn flat-heeled shoes keeled over, on the outer sides, like sailing dorys on a rough sea.

Compared to the lavish fabrics and olive skin of Emilio and Senora Villanueva, Toycie's clothing seems cheap and shabby. The fabrics are thin and worn, and her shoes are clearly past

their prime. The shoe whitening that has accidentally rubbed off on her ankles betrays her attempts to upkeep her used and dirty old shoes. Furthermore, the unnatural whiteness of her shoes highlights the deep brown colour of her skin compared to Emilio's olive tone. Senora Villanueva's "greying curls" (103) further distinguish her from Toycie's "crinkly hair" (109). Kathryn Sloan's work on the role of women in colonial Latin American and Caribbean societies helps to locate Senora Villanueva's response in a longer history of Spanish relations with black and indigenous peoples. According to Sloan (2011:xvi),

The New World presented Europeans with a social structure of unprecedented racial diversity, and race would become a determining factor of the social hierarchy. The Spanish prided themselves for their blood purity (*limpieza de sangre*), and anyone who possessed a phenotype that indicated indigenous or African blood was by definition a social inferior, at least in theory. Darker skin, wiry hair, wide nose, flat face, short stature, and full lips were all physical characteristics that marked a person as mixed-race and thus, lacking honor or status in colonial Latin American society.

Set against this contextual background, it becomes clear that Senora Villanueva does not see Toycie as her equal. When she views Toycie as a poor Creole girl to whom she charitably offers guitar lessons as a kind gesture, she is able to countenance her and even patronisingly refers to her by the nickname "reina" (Spanish for "Queen"). Once Toycie attempts to address her on an equal plane, Senora Villanueva looks at her with "open hostility" and resists the affront of Toycie's presumptuous attempt at equality (102).

Senora Villanueva's desire to distinguish herself from the creoles she deems to be beneath her manifests in many ways. She speaks Spanish and is referred to as "Senora" to emphasise her European ancestry and gentility. Like Beka's father, she also works for Blanco's Import Commission Agency (the name of which she insists on saying in full in order to convey its importance and esteem to her peers) as a typist, a job that Beka and Toycie aspire to. Her desire to keep her son separate from Toycie is part of her attempt to maintain the measure of advantage her family has secured in the eyes of the pania community. Maintenance of the tenuous distinction between panias and creoles requires vigilant policing. Senora Villanueva and her family have not attained the wealth they aspire to, but are assigned a higher place on the social hierarchy because of their Spanish heritage and assimilation of European values and standards. Intermarriage between her son, whom she has placed on a path towards wealth and status via

education in the best schools she can afford, and a poor creole girl, can potentially undo all the social engineering she has carefully carried out.

Moreover, because social status is dependent on the opinion of others, it is important that Emilio's transgression with Toycie remains secret and unacknowledged. Consequently, Toycie's attempt to formalise and potentially make her relationship with Emilio public during her visit to the family at church is viewed as both audacious and offensive. As a result, Senora Villanueva views her, and by extension Beka, "as if they were rebellious campesinos on some rancho" (103). The term "campesino" refers to "a Latin-American Indian farmer or farm laborer" (Merriam-Webster). The use of the term highlights the class difference between Senora Villanueva and Toycie and Beka, both of whom she views as lower-class. Also, as darker skinned women, Toycie and Beka are cast in the role of "field hands" compared to lighter skinned Senora Villanueva's role of "lady of the ranch" or perhaps even house servant, allowing her to look down upon them disdainfully from her position of privilege and superiority. The rebellion Senora Villanueva perceives them to be waging against her and her family is exemplified by their audacity to traverse the lines of the de facto segregation that exists in Belizean culture and society by approaching her at a public gathering with what she perceives to be confrontational intentions. The choice to do so at church further exacerbates the affront because of the church's status as a pillar of respectability and morality within the community. Emilio's premarital sex with Toycie not only contravenes racial boundaries, but religious ones as well. Because of this doubled offense, Senora Villanueva is all the more invested in repudiating Toycie and what she views as her aspiration for social and racial status elevation through her son.

Senora Villanueva's disdain makes Beka even more painfully aware of her own subordination to panyas as a creole woman. This awareness quickly turns to "burning shame" when Miss Arguelles, a Creole woman outside the church, castigates the priest for having anti-Nationalist intentions and promoting Guatemalan interests in Belize and then exposes her "black" bottom to him as a sign of disrespect (104). Observing the scene, Beka is overcome with humiliation because she sees Miss Arguelles as "letting creoles down" (104). Miss Arguelles becomes the object of a spectacle and a representative of all Creole women in the eyes of the observers. In

this case, “The relationship between spectacle and spectator is indeed a hegemonic one, defined by both power and powerlessness” (Stevenson, 2007:142). Similar to Fanon’s experience of feeling as though he himself were on the screen whenever a black person appears in a film, Beka experiences surrogate shame because of her shared identity as creole (Fanon, 2008/1967:140). Her family has inculcated in her a sense of responsibility to her race, which in this instance manifests as an allegiance that brings with it the grief of being disgraced in the presence of outsiders. To atone for Miss Arguelles’s behaviour on behalf of her race, Beka feels compelled to mimic her mother’s ostentatious appropriation of formal British salutation and “bow good evening” on her way out (104). Beka’s experience of shame traps her; she is paralysed by the warring impulses to reject her affiliation with the creole identity that prevents her from achieving that which is reserved for those of a higher class and lighter colour, and feeling inextricably bound to women like Miss Arguelles with whom she shares a racial designation.

Beka’s second-hand shame is echoed by the experience Joonie has when meeting Blair’s mother. While Joonie welcomes Blair into her home and he participates in her family life, she is not welcome in his. Blair is “as at ease with her family as he [is] with her” and wins her parents over easily (29). Joonie’s seems to be aware of Blair’s view of her life and culture as an oddity or a curiosity, citing that he “went with them to church for the experience” as though he is a sightseer or a tourist in her world (29). Nonetheless, she remains enamoured of him, admiring his “proper Afrikaans” which she views as preferable to the “mixed Afrikaans from the Cape Flats” that she speaks (30).²⁹ This welcome is not reciprocated when she meets his mother, an act that does not take place until after they have been dating for some time and have consummated their relationship. Blair symbolically disavows Joonie by dropping her hand as they approach his home, and his mother ignores her when they are introduced. This moment is doubly meaningful because it is the last time Joonie sees Blair before he joins the army, making her rejection by Blair and his family resonate even more.

²⁹ As was addressed in the first chapter, this moment again highlights the classed distinction between so-called “suiwer” (pure) Afrikaans and “Kaaps” (Cape) Afrikaans. “Suiwer Afrikaans” is the term used to describe the officially sanctioned form of Standard Afrikaans taught in academic settings, which is considered to be the language of white Afrikaners. Because Kaaps Afrikaans is associated with the Cape Flats, an area that was classified as “non-white” during apartheid, it bears the same association with lower class status associated with that area (Collins, 2017).

Though Blair's mother Ronelle's racist response to Joonie is not unexpected, it is the class similarities between their families that makes her prejudice seem even more absurd. Both Joonie and Blair live in the same neighbourhood, an atypical residential arrangement for apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, Joonie's family lives in an "identical cottage" to the one Blair's mother occupies, except Ronelle's home is dilapidated with its "broken hinge on the gate" while Joonie's home is freshly painted and decorated with flowers and new window frames (63). Joonie's grandmother refers to Ronelle as a "railway-line white" who thinks her "white identity card makes her better than [them]" (37). Ronelle's precarious position just across the border of the figurative "railway-line" separating coloureds and whites allows her to lord her racial advantage over them despite the fact that they live in the same neighbourhood and are in the same socioeconomic bracket. In this juxtaposition of Joonie and Blair's families, Jacobs's novel is reminiscent of Dalene Matthee's popular South African novel *Fiela se Kind*, which pits a prosperous coloured family against an impoverished white family in a custody battle over an abandoned white child (1985). The white family is awarded custody despite their unsuitable living conditions because their whiteness takes precedence. As with *Fiela se Kind*, Ronelle uses her white advantage as the only basis on which to distance herself from the coloured families she lives amongst. When she rejects Joonie, she does so in broken English, informing her that "he's not a friend for you. Please don't come here again" (32). In response, as opposed to righteous indignation (32),

Old feelings of shame washed over [Joonie]. She had got carried away thinking they were a match, forgotten that she was a coloured girl from the Flats. His poor-white status still made him better than her. What had she expected? That they would waltz off into the sunset and live happily ever after? Even storybooks had more realistic endings.

Joonie's feelings of shame resonate with Wicomb's discussion of the way the body of Sarah Baartman is a reminder of "the shame invested in those (females) who have mated with the colonizer" (1998:91). In that moment, as Ronelle closes the door in Joonie's face, she stands as a representative of such a woman because of her relationship with Blair, but also as a product of such unions as a coloured woman, an identity assumed to be rooted in "miscegenation, the origins of which lie within a discourse of 'race', concupiscence and degeneracy" (Wicomb, 1998:92). Because of Blair's disappearance, Joonie is unfairly placed in the position of the sexual aggressor in the eyes of his mother as she seeks him out at his home. This becomes a source of shame for two reasons. Firstly, reverting the role of the aggressor stereotypically

played on the male and imposing it on Joonie positions her as masculine and transgressive because of her usurpation of a non-normative role. Secondly, as she comes face-to-face with a white woman, she is portrayed as a lascivious coloured woman seeking out a white lover, a stereotype that is historically charged and pejorative. Ronelle's corrective act "puts her in her place," reminding her that as a "coloured girl from the Flats" she is unworthy of a white man's affection.

Much of the resistance that Joonie receives is in response not only to her race, but also to the perception that as scholars such as Margaret Hunter (2005) and Ronald Hall (2010) have pointed out, many women in positions such as Joonie's pursue relationships with men of higher social status in the hope of attaining heightened social status by association. This eliminates the possibility that Joonie is genuinely in love with either Stavros or Blair, and results in the assumption that is pursuing them solely out of so-called "naked ambition." Jacobs troubles this notion by upending the expected end that Joonie's actions would presume. There is little benefit to her liaison with either Blair or Stavros; both relationships prove to be damaging to her in many ways. In the case of her relationship with Blair, as with Toychie, her academics suffer and she spirals into depression. While Toychie is expelled against her will, Joonie voluntarily withdraws from school until her parents are able to convince her to return. This choice has potentially grave consequences, because without an education, as Joonie's mother warns her, it is likely she will "end up in a factory" (33). Aside from the adverse impact on her academic promise and drive, "She had become quiet. She'd lost her zest for life and for long hours sat at her bedroom window looking out" (35). She experiences similar deleterious effects as a result of her relationship with Stavros. When she returns to him after he has beaten her and she runs away the first time, she wonders "what madness had made her come back" and has suicidal thoughts (193).

Despite her depression, Joonie maintains her sanity under these conditions. However, her aunt Laverne, with whom she lives while in the US, suffers a different outcome. Laverne becomes unhinged shortly after becoming pregnant with the child of a white man in apartheid South Africa. She runs away to America, where she lives in a functional but mentally unstable and highly medicated state until her death. It is revealed throughout the course of the narrative that

Joonie is the child Laverne gave birth to, and that she was adopted by her uncle and his wife and raised as their biological child. Laverne never acknowledges this version of the story and tells her boyfriend Billy Bob that she miscarried shortly before leaving South Africa. She tells Joonie yet another version, suggesting that her mother forced her to have an abortion. She also tells Joonie that the father of her child was a Muslim boy she knew from school, but in Joonie's grandmother's version of the story Joonie's father was a white bus driver. The reality of her experience remains shrouded in mystery and lies with neither the details of who Joonie's father is nor under what circumstances she was conceived brought to light. Laverne's varying versions of events make her an unreliable source of information, a fact that is compounded by her mental instability. It remains inconclusive whether she is purposefully obfuscating the truth or if her clouded memory is obscuring the facts. Either way, she is denied a fully articulated voice in the story, as much of the narrative is told from Joonie's perspective and even the version most reliably deemed to be the "truth" about Laverne's teen pregnancy is relayed via her mother and not told clearly from her own perspective. The reader is given the choice to take Ma's version of the story as the "truth," but the choice to do so privileges Ma's "sane" version over Laverne's "crazy" versions. Joonie accepts Ma's version in the end, ostensibly because of the trust she has developed in Ma over the course of their long relationship with each other. Her decision to do so however overlooks the history of deception rooted in her family's decision not to reveal her real parentage to her as a child.

Laverne is eventually sent to a mental asylum, where she dies from complications from dementia. After Joonie kills Stavros in self-defence when he attacks her in yet another incident of domestic abuse, she learns that Blair has been killed on the Angolan border. Blair's death represents yet another way the apartheid state separates them, in life by law and in death by war. Both of her white lovers are dead by the end of the novel, and Joonie is left depressed, having "lost interest in wanting to be close to a man" (246).³⁰ The last lover she has, Reggie, is a fellow

³⁰ Through this tragedy of lost love, abandonment and in Laverne's case, loss of custody of her child as well, the stories of both Laverne and Joonie are symbolically linked to their predecessor Krotoa (who came to be known by the Dutch as Eva), an indigenous Khoikhoi woman who is widely regarded as "the ostensible first mother of South Africa's mixed-race population" due to her short-lived marriage to Danish surgeon Pieter van Meerhoff in the mid-1600s and the children born from that union (Mafe, 2013:27). In South Africa, the story of Krotoa-Eva's tragic life following her husband's death and struggle with alcoholism and poverty was used for many years as a cautionary tale against miscegenation (Conradie, 1998:56). The echoes of Krotoa's experience and its resonances with the tragic mulatto trope commonly used in American fiction lend an additional measure of significance to the story of

coloured South African who has divorced the white wife he “married for the wrong reasons—you know that need to marry a white woman to prove something to yourself? You prove nothing, and the glory, if you can call it that, only lasts for a short while” (217). Reggie’s words prove true in Joonie’s case, except that the short-lived glory she experiences does not extend into marriage. Ultimately, Joonie concedes to Stavros’ grieving mother in a letter: “You were right when you said to Stavros that a fish cannot live with a bird and that our cultural differences and traditions would eventually drive us apart. I now know your words to be true” (239). After the evidence she has observed and the punishment she has endured, Joonie does not see Stavros’s abuse as the final wedge between them, but instead attributes the misfortune she has endured to the unnatural mixing of a “fish” and a “bird.”

There are marked similarities between Laverne’s experience and Toycie’s. Neither woman is able to raise the child she carries—Laverne gives Joonie up for adoption and Toycie is plunged into depression by her pregnancy and then miscarries in a (potentially self-inflicted) fall from a bridge near her home. It is implied that Toycie’s depression, delusions and potential suicide attempt are caused not only by Emilio’s rejection and suggestion that the child she carries is not his, but also by her expulsion from school as a result of her pregnancy. As a poor creole woman, Toycie has two primary avenues of advancement available to her: education or marriage. When Emilio rejects Toycie and her unborn child, both options are foreclosed. Tragically, her access to the former is negated by her attempts to pursue the latter. In an attempt to grasp at both, Toycie finds herself with neither. This compounds her devastation because without a high school education, her hopes for a prosperous future are dashed. As Toycie breaks down in her arms, Beka is reminded of the “childhood game song Toycie and herself had played as children: There’s a brown girl in a ring, tra la la la la’ as she was shoved into a wide circle of girls holding hands” (109). Toycie experience invokes this memory because she embodies the image of a brown girl powerlessly tossed about in a circle of misfortune.

In her analysis of the text, Heather Smyth reads Toycie’s expulsion from school on the grounds of her pregnancy through a feminist lens (2011). While her reading presents interesting insight

both Laverne and Joonie, linking them to a long trajectory of both fiction and non-fiction being (re)interpreted as discouraging interracial relationship and miscegenation.

into how the text critiques some of the misogynistic aspects of Belizean society, it does not take into account the complex racial and class-based dynamics at work in the text. Smyth points out that Toycie's expulsion is "symbolic of the scapegoating of women on the altar of national and religious moral progress" (2011:194). In response to Toycie's situation, the principal of St. Cecilia's, Sister Virgil, callously declares that "women must learn to control our emotions" and equates Toycie's downfall with the baseness and immorality of Belize as a whole, determining that she "cannot see much hope for the long term development of [the] country" (120). I agree with Smyth's view that Sister Virgil's unrelenting attitude towards Toycie and decision to expel her from school is a punitive gesture to correct bad behaviour and discourage similar types of disobedience from the social mores required by the Belizean society, and further her analysis by positing that while gender is unquestionably implicated, there are significant racial and social aspects involved as well. Toycie's resulting mental devolution culminates in her banishment to the Belize Mental Asylum, which once housed "a small concentration camp...for a few German residents of the town" during World War 2, further emphasising its role as a repository for outcasts (133). As Smyth points out, Toycie is "punished to strengthen the social order... [as] accentuated by the carceral images surrounding the asylum where she is kept following her mental breakdown: Toycie is kept in a cell with barred windows, literally and figuratively cast out because of her mental state.

Shortly after being discharged from the asylum, Toycie wanders off during a hurricane and is crushed by a mango tree. In response to Toycie's death, no traditional memorial service is held for her because of Aunt Eila's poverty. In Beka's view it is as though Toycie's death goes unmourned, as if she never existed. Toycie's breakdown causes Beka to believe that "her nurture was such that her life would probably break down, maybe in Toycie's way, [and if so] she wanted it to happen in a faraway corner where she could maybe pick up the pieces, glue them together and start all over again" (147). As such, when Granny Ivy expresses concern for "the day [Beka will] fall in love and what that'll do to [her] high mind" (169), in response Beka assures her: "Fall in love? Who? Me? I'll never fall in love. Just thinking about Toycie and Emilio hurts my stomach like after a good chase of senna leaves" (170). After watching the tragic downfall of Toycie, who is described as more virtuous, hardworking and responsible than herself, Beka begins to view her own downfall as inevitable. Furthermore, she attributes this

eventual downfall not to her nature, but notably to her “nurture” suggesting her awareness of some fatal flaw in the way she has been raised, cultivated, indoctrinated and interpellated. The lesson she has learnt from Toycie is that love brings pain, especially if one’s love interest is not in keeping with society’s rules. In Roydon Salick’s analysis of the text, he proposes that Toycie’s death is functional and instructive for Beka in various ways: “Toycie dies so that Beka can live, so that Beka can achieve self-motivated, hard-won success. Toycie dies so that Beka, much more cautious and informed in sexual matters, and more politically oriented, can fulfill her own ambitions and those of her friend” (2001:109). As Salick goes on to point out, “Toycie's life... becomes in an obvious way, the greatest object lesson for Beka; for her personal involvement in Toycie's life and tragedy is the constant reminder of what to avoid and what to embrace” (2001:116). Like Sister Virgil, Beka draws a parallel between her personal future and that of her nation, determining that she is doomed to “bruk down...just like [her] own country” (115). After watching Toycie’s breakdown, the heart-breaking potential of a similar outcome in her own case forces Beka to conclude that she must leave Belize.

Contrastingly, Joonie’s experience abroad convinces her to return home. Initially, she arrives in the US hopeful that the colourful, integrated post-Civil Rights America she sees on the drive from the airport will be more progressive than the repressive South Africa she has left behind. She sees America as a “melting pot of cultures” (134) where there is “opportunity for anyone with determination to succeed” (134). However, after Stavros’ death, she returns home with “no desire to leave South Africa again” (243). Not even America’s supposedly racially liberal environment is conducive to interracial romance. Furthermore, Laverne escapes South Africa to America hoping that the move will alleviate her mental symptoms but it does not. She becomes progressively worse and eventually dies there. Fearing that her mother’s insanity is hereditary, Joonie flees the US before her mother’s fate befalls her.

Conclusion

Edgell’s text is full of symbolic characters, each of whom provide insight into an aspect of Belizean culture she addresses in the novel. One such character is Maskman, whose tragic story is a commentary on the policing of interracial romance. His moniker refers to the “black oilskin

hood” he wears “in heat and in cool, in dry and in wet, never taking it off when anyone could see” (31). He is forced to cover his face, along with the rest of his body (31), because

In his youth, Maskman had been a handsome ‘sweet boy’ who, during a sojourn in Stann Creek, a coastal town south of Belize, compromised the daughter of a Carib man who had befriended him. Maskman could not marry the girl, though he loved her, without losing face in the creole community, whose members seldom married among the Caribs, although these two groups shared, in varying degrees, a common African Ancestry.

One night, so it was said, a group of Carib people, in painted masks, entered the house where ‘sweet boy’ lay asleep in his hammock. Each person touched his face and neck obeahing him so that these parts of his body became dotted with white speckles, leaving the rest of his body black.

As Gikandi points out, “the masked man foregrounds the paradoxical relationship between the plural cultures of Belize and their anxiety toward their ancestral African cultures. Rejected by both the creole and the Caribs, the masked man represents the pain of division” in this dysfunctional, pluralistic nation (2018:224). Notably, Maskman’s engagement in a romantic tryst with a woman beneath him in both the racial and social hierarchy is punished just as severely as if she were of a higher class or lighter complexion. He has “stepped out of line,” and as such, suffers consequences. Ironically, Maskman’s choice not to marry his lover out of fear of “losing face” in the Creole community results in the loss of not only his ‘sweet boy’ face, but his entire body. The attribution of Maskman’s skin condition to obeah further ingrains this prejudice by reifying the connection between Caribs and witchcraft. Furthermore, while the Creole community decries the prejudice of the panias, they exhibit the same prejudice towards Caribs. This rumour is widespread among the children of Belize City and serves as a cautionary tale for anyone considering similar romantic or sexual border crossing.

On the surface, both *Joonie* and *Beka Lamb* serve similar purposes, their tragic and morose endings perpetuate the belief that such relationships can only end in despair. The recurrence of the trope of madness further complicates this association between interracial romance and tragedy. Keeping in mind the contention between Caminero-Santangelo and Gilbert & Gubar, it is clear that the “escape” into madness these women experience is actually an obliteration. Not only are they erased, but their voices are also muted. As Cristina Herrera argues, “The madwoman as closeted rebel is a tempting and seductive argument, but it nevertheless positions the madwoman as a static, powerless figure, a woman trapped by her madness, not liberated by

it” (2011:54). Even after a thorough reading of both texts, the point of view of both “madwomen” remains conspicuously inaccessible. They are spoken for by family members and relatives who attempt to decipher their emotions and motives, but are never given the chance to relate their own tale. In the cases of both Joonie and Toycie, madness silences and exiles, rendering them voiceless.

Both women experience this punishment because of their choice to look beyond the racial boundaries of their society. These societies are structured around racial and social hierarchies that require obedience. If the fragile racial systems that protect whiteness and upper-class interests are revealed to be penetrable, they immediately lose power. Both white and non-white people share an investment in the maintenance of these structures, because the division also protects whatever minimal privilege they have secured. Interracial romance has long been feared for its potential to destabilise these systems. The irrational concept of racial segregation requires buy-in, which can only be achieved through indoctrination and coercion. In the novels, the authors creatively depict the symbolic result of the refusal to obey the systems of race and class by portraying women who potentially destabilise these systems as mentally unstable. The “insanity” of racism and colorism insinuates itself into the minds of the young women who become victims. This mental instability both results from and mirrors that of the societies around them.

Through this excavation of the interplay between colour and class, the novels challenge the commonly held belief that interracial relationships function as a vehicle for class mobility for the partner with lower class status. Both Joonie and Toycie find themselves in either similar or worse positions after their relationships end, with the additional trauma of being rejected because of their unsuitability as a result of their social deficiency in the eyes of their partners. The novels also upend the racist notion that sexual involvement with a non-white partner corrupts “white purity.” The argument against intermarriage with non-whites relies on the supposedly corruptive, contaminative nature of black skin and its deleterious impact on white culture and the sanctity of the presumably “pure” white blood line. These “abstract ideals of racial purity and fears of racial degeneration” ignore the negative consequences that the non-white partner faces as a result of the coupling (Tyner and Houston, 2000:388). As the story of Maskman neglects detail regarding his

Carib lover, these narratives write out the experience of the other person in the affair. Edgell and Jacobs challenge this by portraying the encounter with whiteness as the cause of madness, thereby rendering it as the true corrupting influence. Toychie and Laverne challenge traditional assumptions of the “contagion” of blackness menacing the “purity” of whiteness because they are both left sickened by their encounter with a white man. Their youth, beauty and vibrancy is diminished, the light in their eyes having figuratively “gone out.”

Jacobs and Edgell illustrate that the boundaries preventing interracial romance remain adamant. Their depiction of this controversial topic constitutes their participation in the reflexive process of simultaneously creating and reflecting the world. Regarding sexual relations in particular, Ratele (2009:299) shows us:

It is not only official power – political, economic or religious office-bearers – which seeks to mold our sexual interiors (fantasies, secrets, indiscretions) as well as our sexual interactions with others. Television presenters, comedians, salespeople, film directors and producers, sports show hosts, marketers, novelists, designers, scientists and poets also seek to influence our desires, dreams and ways of feeling about ourselves and others. As do individuals close to us – our mothers, uncles, grandparents, siblings, children, aunts and fathers; they seek to affect the way we live our lives, as we do their lives.

Edgell and Jacobs take this responsibility seriously, reflecting on not only the past, but also on that which is yet to come. In Joonie’s case, her optimism regarding race relations decreases in inverse proportion to the optimism and freedom of her nation. Even in post-apartheid South Africa, as a woman in her 50s, she is still haunted by her experience as a teenage girl. As an adult her daughter leaves for the US but Joonie remains, accepting that “the love [she] had searched for [her] whole life had eluded [her]” (247). Joonie’s attitude does not indicate any hopefulness regarding race relations in the future of post-apartheid South Africa. Likewise, Beka’s choice to leave Belize on the eve of independence indicates her hopelessness regarding race relations in the burgeoning nation. Edgell’s depiction of the community’s commitment to category-maintenance work regarding race and class portend a deeply segregated and hierarchical sovereign Belize. The policing of interracial romance carried out by agents of the family, church and academic realm are so deeply entrenched that nominal independence cannot uproot them.

Chapter Three

“The Astonishing Memory of Skin”: Chasing Respectability in *Playing in the Light* & “How to Beat a Child the Right and Proper Way”

Respectability is one of the most ubiquitous signifiers of class. It informs how we speak, who we speak to, how we classify others, what we study and how we know who we are (or are not). Respectability is usually the concern of those who are not seen to have it. Respectability would not be of concern here, if the working classes (Black and White) had not consistently been classified as dangerous, polluting, threatening, revolutionary, pathological and without respect. It would not be something to desire, to prove and to achieve, if it had not been seen to be a property of ‘others’, those who are valued and legitimated... It is rarely recognized as an issue by those who are positioned with it, who are normalized by it, and who do not have to prove it. (Skeggs, 1997:1)

Since the colonial encounter, the promotion of white superiority has relied on the portrayal of white people as the ideal humans and inherently respectable, while all others must prove their humanity through the performance of respectability according to European standards. This has come to be known as either “respectability politics” or the “politics of respectability,” which refers to the adoption of cultural mores associated with hegemonic whiteness by people of colour to counteract racism. Many scholars attribute the origins of the concept to the anti-slavery rhetoric of W.E.B. Du Bois, Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington.³¹ These champions of racial equality and anti-slavery often referred to the respectability, civility and humanity of black people in the United States in their rhetoric in the attempt to convince white people to support their cause. In so doing, they turned the personal attempts of black people to meet the standards of Christian, Western rules of respectability into political tools to bolster their arguments. Following in this tradition, decades later black American feminist scholars such as Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham,³² E. Frances White³³ and Victoria W. Wolcott³⁴ chronicled black women’s attempts to deploy the politics of respectability to counter the intersectional oppression caused by the combination of sexism and racism.

³¹ Much of Du Bois’ writing, including *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and *The Talented Tenth* are strong proponents of respectability politics (1903), as is Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and Booker T. Washington’s *Up from Slavery* (1900) and *Character Building* (1902).

³² See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous discontent: The women’s movement in the Black Baptist church, 1880-1920*. (Rhode Island: AMS Publications, 1993).

³³ See E. Frances White, *Dark continent of our bodies: Black feminism & politics of respectability*. (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2010).

³⁴ See Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking respectability: African American women in interwar Detroit*. (North Carolina: UNC Press Books, 2013).

Despite the ephemeral nature of a notion as relative as “respectability,” due to the hegemony of Western, Christian ideals in much of the previously colonised world, regardless of personalised and culturally specific iterations, “the concept does contain a fixed core” (Goodhew, 2004:xviii). According to Goodhew (2004:xviii), the general understanding of what has come to be viewed as “respectable behaviour” includes:

a stress on economic independence, on orderliness, cleanliness, and fidelity in sexual relations. This is often, though not always, linked to religion. Belief in education as a beneficial force is strongly present. Respectability could also be defined negatively: as implying hostility to alcohol (or at least excessive consumption of alcohol), gambling, sexual unions outside monogamy, and a lack of religious devotion.

Behaviour that contravenes the boundaries of what has come to be known as socially respectable is therefore categorised as deviant by comparison. This is politicised because of the social enforcement of compliance, which excludes those who are unwilling or unable to comply. Compliance to the rules of respectability has therefore become a key tactic of marginalised groups to gain respect and social status, to varying degrees of success.³⁵

In her analysis of the experiences of working-class white women in northwest England, Beverley Skeggs explores the ways in which the stakes of respectability are raised for lower-class women, for whom class discrimination is compounded by sexism (1997). In the epigraph to this chapter, Skeggs illuminates the insidious insinuation of the politics of respectability into every aspect of life. If the circumstances of one’s birth do not meet the criteria for what is considered respectable, it can take a lifetime of policing to undo this stain. For those born on the right side of respectability, it can appear effortless. The UK (where Skeggs’s study takes place) has a long, well-documented history of classing women on the basis of their proximity to standards of respectability and using physical appearance as a yardstick by which to measure respectability.³⁶ This classification system has been applied most stringently to the working class, who are further

³⁵ Activists in the American #BlackLivesMatter movement have called for the rejection of Respectability politics, insisting that the employment of white ways of being and dressing have not protected black Americans from the countless acts of police brutality they experience regularly in the US (Thrasher, 2015).

³⁶ For more on the relationship between class and gender in the UK, see Lynette Finch, *The classing gaze. Sexuality, Class and Surveillance* (Sydney: Allen, 1993) and Lynda Nead, *Myths of sexuality: representations of women in Victorian Britain* (UK: Blackwell Publishers).

marginalised because the characteristics associated with their relative poverty inherently fall beneath the standards of respectability.

According to Skeggs, respectability has been “central to the development of the notion of Englishness” and helped to define the “genteel middle classes” who were seen as individuals each with unique personalities, distinct from the faceless masses of the working class (1997:3). Simon Gikandi’s *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (1996) exhibits how these same models replicated themselves in the colonies, and in *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women’s Writing in Caribbean Narrative* (1999), Belinda Edmondson discusses it specifically in the lens of the appropriation of British gentility by Caribbean canonical male authors. Edmondson highlights the ways many male Caribbean authors revealed themselves in their writing to be yearning for the individuality and distinction associated with the genteel English middle classes. Edmondson’s writing is informed by Hazel Carby, who also addresses the complicated indexes of respectability applied to black masculinity in American culture (2009). For many, there is a strong desire to be seen as “the respectable, the moral [and] the worthy,” in the hope that this status will guarantee the benefits attendant therewith (Skeggs, 1997:3).

As Gikandi exhibits, the British value system that reverences respectability was exported to the British colonies, conveyed by the many agents of British colonialism dispatched all around the world (1996). In some instances, the version of “Britishness” transported to the colonies was even more extreme than in England, because colonialists felt compelled to assert their Britishness even more to demonstrate the difference between themselves and the “natives” and to prove that despite where they lived and worked, they remained British. As Vivian Bickford-Smith illustrates, in South Africa in the late 1800s, the English began to emerge as the dominant ethnicity especially in the Cape, making Englishness highly desirable (2003). According to Bickford-Smith, in order to be considered as acceptably English in the Cape it was necessary “to be White, English speaking, in favour of the Empire and, that ubiquitous Victorian virtue, respectable. Respectability implied acceptance of the values of the English elite: thrift, the sanctity of property, deference to superiors, belief in the moralising efficacy of hard work and

cleanliness” (2003:39). The pre-eminence of Englishness catapulted the cornerstone of British values, respectability, to the foreground of South African cultural politics.

In South Africa, these British standards of respectability were complemented by similar ideals promoted by Afrikaner nationalism, which simultaneously upheld the concept of “ordentlikheid,”³⁷ the Afrikaner response to British respectability. As Christi van der Westhuizen argues, Afrikaner commitment to ordentlikheid has also served to counteract the discriminatory stereotypes of Afrikaners as brutish and uncivilised relative to the British that have persisted since the 1800s.³⁸ Despite the Afrikaners’ effort to promote Afrikaans culture and the Calvinist-influenced standards of ordentlikheid, these have historically served primarily to support the more dominant rules of respectability defined by the British particularly in the Cape, which has a history of Anglophilia and English dominance.

In the Cape Colony, the roots of Anglophilia can be found in the period of British Colonialism, especially after the second British conquest of the Cape in 1806. When the British took over from the Dutch, they made no attempts to hide their sense of superiority to both the metropolitan Dutch and the white inhabitants of the Cape Colony (Ross, 1999:42). Because of their political and imperial power over the colony, English nationalism became “the prime nationalism of South Africa, against which all the subsequent ones, whether Afrikaner or African, reacted, either directly or at a remove” (Ross, 1999:43). Much of South African society imbibed the propaganda of British superiority and the prevailing notion that “English ways are the best” became a guiding doctrine for many, despite the history of Afrikaner dominance during apartheid (Ross, 1999:43).

In keeping with apartheid’s strictly segregated racial hierarchy, each racial group had its own relationship to the politics of respectability. In regards to coloured identity and coloured femininity in particular, Sean Samson’s doctoral research reveals that ‘the discourse of race

³⁷ Ordentlikheid is an Afrikaans word, the meaning of which includes respectability, “presentability, good manners, decency, politeness and humility with a Calvinist tenor” (van der Westhuizen, 2018).

³⁸ Van der Westhuizen quotes Timothy Keegan, who describes the dominant impression of the Boers in the 1800s as that of “an inferior or degraded class of colonist” and Lord Kitchener who described the Boers as “uncivilised Afrikaner savages with a thin white veneer” (cited in van der Westhuizen, 2018).

constructed coloured femininity in very specific ways, drawing on class and beauty ideals to construct respectability” (2014:81). Samson argues that “attempts at respectability” in the coloured community are “a response to both colonial and apartheid discourse” (2014:81). In his study on black South African relationships to respectability and resistance in Sophiatown, David Goodhew points out that both the British and African working class share a “tenacious attachment to respectable norms” which undoubtedly is in response to the combination of both British and Afrikaner notions of respectability/ordentlikheid enforced through colonialism and apartheid (2004:xix). Ross affirms this inclination towards assimilation by pointing out that in the Cape, so-called “Bastards,” along with free blacks, maintained a tenuous undefined position in the social structure of the Cape colony, and attempted to secure a measure of status by “behaving as far as possible in the ways in which they had seen the frontier farmers doing” (1999:33).

The assimilation tactics that Goodhew refers to are echoed in the Caribbean, where the adaptation of European, and specifically British ways of being were seen as a passport to heightened social status. As Belinda Edmondson points out, the lack of access to financial wealth for non-whites in the Caribbean meant that they could not acquire land, which was seen as a key marker of modernity and modernisation. In the absence of the ownership of land or material wealth, “the nascent black middle class... had to “own” something other than the land or commerce in order to produce the nation in its own image. That “something” ...was the “purchase” of “the manners, habits, and positioning of the English gentleman class through the acquisition of Victorian models of intellectual authority and knowledge” (1999:23).

Edmondson’s work highlights the influence of Victorian ideals on Caribbean nationalism and the impact of British cultural imperialism on Caribbean writers. She points out this notable contradiction (1999:37):

the education of black West Indians was consciously formulated to remove them from the world of the black community in every way – social, religious, cultural, and so forth. Personal progress therefore demanded distance from their own society. On the other [hand], it was this very distance – this ability to manipulate European culture and manners – which provided the basis for the incipient nationalism of this particular [educated] class.

Since this educated, predominantly male group of “modern” post-colonial subjects became the leaders who then participated in the production of the independent nations of the Caribbean,

“Englishness – Victorian Englishness, no less – somehow became important in the definition of what it means to be Caribbean” (Edmondson, 1999:2). Because the versions of Caribbean nationalism these colonial subjects created was built on a foundation of an investment in British superiority, British culture became a cornerstone of many of the newly formed Caribbean nation states.

In a frequently cited article entitled “Reputation and Respectability: A Suggestion for Caribbean Ethnology,” Peter Wilson provides his perspective on the distinction between reputation and respectability in the Caribbean. Wilson suggests that in Caribbean culture, issues concerning reputation and the maintenance thereof are generally more of a male concern, while respectability has primarily been women’s domain (1969). Though Wilson’s argument now reads as both dated and sexist, his analysis of Caribbean culture at the time suggests that the machismo associated with Caribbean masculinity meant that the requirement for respectability did not apply as much to men as to women, who were viewed as responsible for the upkeep of the home. Writing on the Jamaican context in particular, Deborah Thomas reveals that the pursuit of respectability was one of the primary concerns of what she calls the “creole nationalist project” adopted after Jamaica’s independence from England (2004:252). Thomas points out that there was a significant racial dynamic to the nation-building project, as the domain of respectability is associated with the brown elite middle and upper social classes, and generally excludes the black working-class majority. As she points out, “In Jamaica, as elsewhere in the West Indies, the dynamic tensions between respectability and reputation, egalitarianism and hierarchy, continue to shape the range of possibilities for action for all members of the society” (2004:232). Thomas argues that in an attempt to replace the cultural ethos of British superiority inculcated during colonialism, the creole multiracial nationalist project aimed to replace it with a new notion of Jamaicanness based on respectability. Respectability was defined as “a value complex emphasising the cultivation of education, thrift, industry, self-sufficiency via land ownership, moderate Christian living, community uplift, the constitution of family through legal marriage and related gendered expectations, and leadership by the educated middle classes” which nonetheless generally upheld the same British mores and values that reigned during colonialism (2004:5-6).

Intertwined in this privileging of British culture are the attendant ideals of Victorian womanhood, which centres on domesticity, motherhood and respectability. Historically these ideals have been applied more to middle-class than working-class women, as middle-class women were seen as having both the time and the disposable income to create a home that would be considered “respectable.” Working-class women could rarely achieve this standard, except at great personal cost. Furthermore, a key aspect of Victorian womanhood was distance from the manual labour that working-class women could not afford to avoid. Nonetheless, while the realities of the lifestyle idealised by Victorian womanhood remained a distant possibility for working-class women, the ideology retained its power and influence (Abrams, 2001). According to Skeggs (1997:5),

At the core of all articulations of the working class was the discursive construct of the modern, that is middle-class, family in which the behaviour of women was interpreted in relation to their role as wives and mothers and based on their responsibility, the control of their sexuality, their care, protection and education of children and their capacity for the general surveillance of working-class men.

Women who were unable to or disinterested in meeting these standards fell short of the benchmark of respectability. As such, women have historically borne the burden of this “discursive construct” more heavily than men, “since it is women who have been especially associated with desires for the artefacts associated with bourgeois existence” (Lawler, 1999:3).

Most of the studies that address the anxieties of working-class women’s attempts to secure respectability focus on white women, as is the case with Steph Lawler’s study of white British women in her article entitled “‘Getting out and Getting Away’: Women’s Narrative of Class Mobility” (1999). Lawler’s revelations regarding womanhood, respectability and desire have broad application because of her overarching focus on the experience of working-class women as a whole. She argues for a view of class that acknowledges the role of economic inequality but also insists that a more meaningful way to view class is through “cultural factors which are the more apparent indicators of class distinction and class inequality” (1999:4). Furthermore, Lawler discusses the pathologisation of the desire for upward class mobility and respectability in working-class women, revealing the ways in which this desire is coded as “passing your place” or “putting on airs,” rendering class relations as “relations of superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality, judgement/shame” (1999:5). In this context, the desire for the trappings of “middle-classness” become logical attempts to circumvent stigma; “Instead, women’s desires

for, and envy of, respectability and material goods are marked as apolitical, trivial, [and] pretentious,” despite the fact that “these desires, this envy, should be situated within *political* struggles around dispossession and exclusion” (Lawler, 1999:12; italics in original).

Lawler’s work is remarkable because of the spotlight it places on the ways women *feel* about being seen as aspiring to a class status that they were not born into. The women she interviews express deep feelings of discomfort, distress, and most commonly shame about their attempts to attain a higher-class status and the slipups they occasionally make which they view are markers of their misplacement in the “wrong” class. When Lawler’s (1999) research is put into conversation with Sarah Ahmed’s (2004) work on emotion and affect theory, there are some useful insights that can be extracted from the intersection of both womens’ work on the social construction of emotion. In recent psychology, it has come to be understood that “rather than emotions being understood as coming from within and moving outwards, emotions are assumed to come from without and move inward” (Ahmed, 2004:10). Ahmed challenges this notion, suggesting that instead of there being a presupposed natural boundary between inside and out, “it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others” (2004:10). In terms of shame, this suggests that the boundary of pride and shame is created through contact with others, who help us form a sense of what behaviour is acceptable and what behaviour is shameful. When Lawler’s work is viewed through this lens, it becomes clear that the women’s feelings of shame are constructed through their sense that they are being perceived by others as engaging in a shameful act. Ahmed points out that these feelings of shame then become compounded because “the bind of shame is that it is intensified by being seen by others *as shame*” (2004:103; italics in original). I contend that there is a similar bind to be found in the realm of the politics of respectability because the attempt to appear respectable when one is not presumed to be requires a “performance of respectability” that is often interpreted as forced or fake, and this “impersonation” of respectability negates itself because it is seen as unrespectable because of its inauthenticity.

The characters I will be analysing in this chapter are women whose respectability is assumed to be questionable because they are women of colour. The intersection of race, class and gender,

compounded by the history of sexual exploitation and defeminisation perpetuated throughout colonialism and slavery has meant that the respectability of women of colour is always seen to be in question. Women of colour bear the burden of the stereotypes ascribed not only to their female body but to their skin colour as well. The work of bell hooks shines a light on this intersection between race, class and gender, and the inextricability of the three in the experiences of women of colour. According to hooks (2000:7),

Class matters. Race and gender can be used as screens to deflect attention away from the harsh realities class politics exposes. Clearly, just when we should all be paying attention to class, using race and gender to understand and explain its new dimensions, society, even our government, says let's talk about race and racial injustice. It is impossible to talk meaningfully about ending racism without talking about class.

hooks argues for a reflection on the experiences of black women that takes seriously the ways they are discriminated against because of the assumption that they are working class, and the baggage they carry as a result of this.. Respectability politics is deeply implicated in this, as it serves as one of the primary means by which women of colour attempt to circumvent this stigma, with varying degrees of success.

As Skeggs points out, “Respectability contains judgements of class, race, gender and sexuality and different groups have differential access to the mechanisms for generating, resisting and displaying respectability” (Skeggs, 1997:2). Women of colour have the least amount of access to mechanisms through which to generate and display respectability because they are prematurely judged to be sexually immoral, predisposed to hard labour and incapable of maintaining a marital relationship. These stereotypes hold inherent contradictions, as women of colour have historically played the role of the domestic caregiver for wealthier families, a role which forces them to abandon their own homes and families to care for others. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham’s work addresses the ways African American women have attempted to counter these stereotypes and contradictions by promoting sexual propriety, cleanliness, politeness and temperance as characteristics that designated them as respectable and therefore worthy of equality with whites (1993). These distinctions also served a gatekeeping function because they can be used to promote “difference of social status within the working class” thereby promoting division between the various strata (Higginbotham, 1993:204).

Due to the comparable colonial heritages of the Cape and the Anglophone Caribbean contexts, the hegemonic discourse of black, African savagery juxtaposed against white, British civility has resulted in similar anxieties around distancing oneself from blackness in order to appear more civilised and respectable in exchange for higher social status. Many works of literary fiction from these locations explore this topic, portraying characters all along the colour spectrum who feel trapped by their appearance and the class positioning it assigns them. In this chapter, I will be exploring how respectability is constituted in these contexts and what cultural and social pressures determine the parameters of what counts as “respectable behaviour.” In so doing, I will also interrogate the function and effectiveness of the deployment of the politics of respectability for women both inside and outside the home. In this analysis, viewed through the lens of Sarah Ahmed’s (2004) work on affect theory, I will unpack how the emotional and psychological work required to uphold externally determined standards of respectability impacts not only on the characters in question themselves, but has a generational impact on their children as well.

South African literature provides fertile ground for the analysis of the use of the politics of respectability to circumvent racism because of the history of racial discrimination and segregation during apartheid. Mohamed Adhikari has identified assimilationism and the struggle for respectability as among the core concerns of coloured identity as a result of the social and political marginalisation associated with the intermediate status of coloured people in the South African racial hierarchy (2005). Many of the works written about the coloured South African experience during apartheid explore coloured assimilationism, including the work of Zoe Wicomb, whose writing presents a multiplicity of ways of being and expressing coloured identity. As J.U. Jacobs puts it, “Wicomb's works reveals a tension between, on the one hand, acceptance of the complex discourse of colouredness with all its historical discontinuities, and, on the other, the desire for a more cohesive sense of cultural identity, drawn from a collective narrative of the past” (2008:1). As a writer and an academic Wicomb does not shy away from the troubled past and present of colouredness; she takes head on the task of “washing dirty linen in public” (Mengel, 2010:27).

In regards to her own experience of being viewed as respectable, Wicomb notes (Mengel, 2010:27):

Being middle-class means that I don't personally suffer the indignities of racial discrimination, but I come across perfectly respectable, educated people making disparaging remarks about black people. Which means that you make sure that everything you do is above reproach; that in the workplace you can never afford to slip up – self-imposed yes, but nevertheless not without reason.

In this comment Wicomb reveals the lie at the crux of respectability politics: the compulsion to police one's own behaviour and appearance appears to be self-imposed, but the "reason[s]," economic, social, and political, are the real motivation. Her use of the word "afford" hints at the socio-economic consequences of non-compliance. Wicomb can be described as middle-class and well educated, and she speaks the sort of English that is acceptable in the courts of academia. She, and by extension her work, have passed the respectability test. To a certain extent this shields her from the "indignities of racial discrimination," but the phantom threat continually looms, enforcing continued obedience.

The psychological impact of this looming threat is palpably evident in Wicomb's third book, a novel entitled *Playing in the Light* published in 2006. The novel centres on the Campbell family, the matriarch of which, Helen Campbell, masterminds their reclassification from coloured to white in the early 1970s. In the context of apartheid, Helen has internalised a belief in the superiority of white culture and values and spends her life in pursuit of the elusive, idealised whiteness she valorises. After their reclassification, she and her husband become "so convinced of the importance of skin, so pleased with their paleness, that they just couldn't understand the real world" (Wicomb, 2006:171). Helen raises her daughter Marion as a white woman completely ignorant of her family's heritage and origins, and the storyline of the novel traces Marion's search for the truth about her family's history.

Wicomb's portrayal of the Campbell family's life after their choice to "pass" for white is damning; they lose all connection to their family and community and receive very little in return. The life that Helen Campbell creates for her family is portrayed as cold and unhappy. Helen's obsession with maintaining the standards of respectability she associates with whiteness creates a sterile, barren environment in her home. When Marion reflects on her upbringing, she describes their home as a "barren world" where "secrets engendered secrets with abandon, wantonly reproductive, so that now, looking back, the past is contained in endless dreary rows of parcelled days, wrapped in tissue paper, each with its drop of poison at the core" (61). Her memories are

marred by “the weight of marital misery, the gloom and silence of her childhood, the air of restraint, as if the very plaster were giving its all to prevent the house from exploding” (47). The home is a contentious, tense atmosphere characterised by lack and absence as opposed to the fullness Helen imagines whiteness to contain.

In order to maintain their elaborate ruse, Helen raises Marion with no sense of history or knowledge of her family lineage, claiming “there are no family photographs of her ancestors, something to do with relatives having fallen out with her father, a family feud of sorts” (26). Despite her parents’ silence, the narrator describes the history they have left behind as “eloquent” and “garrulous” (152). It “asserts itself boldly, threatens to mark, to break through and stain the primed white canvas that is their life” (152). The language Wicomb uses to describe the Campbells’ lives as whites is overwhelmingly negative, indicating the grave consequences of their choice.

Helen’s insecurities concerning her racial identity cause her to police her family’s behaviour, and in her attempts to protect them from being discovered she becomes an agent of racist ideology, promoting the veneration of whiteness and the denigration of non-white culture and appearance. The primary tool Helen employs towards this end is the never-ending list of prescribed behaviours that meet her interpretation of the standards of respectability and decency. She is described as tightly wound and calculating until her “self-willed and efficient death” (4) and determined to “pull [her]self up by [her] own bootstraps” (141). She rules the home with an iron fist, demanding strict adherence to the code of conduct she has developed in keeping with upper middle-class, English standards. Fully invested in the doctrine of respectability politics, Helen insists that if she and her family appear respectable in the eyes of their white observers, they will ascend the social ladder of apartheid society and achieve her dream to “buy [her] own house, move up the slope of the mountain where they could see the curve of the bay, and speak English” (130). However, the Campbell family’s reality belies Helen’s belief; they “had no friends, no visitors, could not have anyone come to the house until they acquired decent things, from decent furniture to decent teaspoons, although, no sooner would they get a coveted object that it would be superseded by something even more desirable, more decent. Decency, it transpired, was an endlessly deferred, unachievable goal” (167). Their pursuit of respectability

via the norms of white culture exemplifies Richard Dyer's description of whiteness: it is "presented as an apparently attainable, flexible, varied category," but in fact, it remains unattainable due to the "always movable criterion of inclusion" (1997:57).

Though Helen is born and raised in the Cape, her outlook and experiences are echoed by those portrayed in a short story written by Jamaican author Colin Channer, entitled "How to Beat a Child the Right and Proper Way" (2006). The story is part of an anthology called *Iron Balloons: Hit Fiction from Jamaica's Calabash Writer's Workshop*, which was published in the same year as Wicomb's *Playing in the Light* (2006). In her analysis of Channer's work, scholar Belinda Edmondson has situated him as a firmly "middlebrow" author (2009). In her estimation, "Channer has attempted to strike a balance between two irresolvable Caribbean positions on race that are inevitably classed: on the one hand, that ethnic hybridity is organic to the Caribbean; on the other, that blackness is the fundamental culture and color of the Caribbean" (Edmondson, 2009:5). These seemingly incompatible positions lie side by side in his writing, highlighting the complexity intrinsic to the question of Caribbean authenticity. The list of influences that Channer states as being amongst his most formative include Bob Marley and dub poet Mutabaruka, all black nationalists whose work celebrates Jamaica's African heritage.

"How to Beat a Child the Right and Proper Way" foregrounds Jamaica's preoccupation with propriety, which starkly contrasts the nation's public image, generally interpreted to be brash, loud and vulgar in keeping with the reggae and dancehall music it is perhaps best known for. Both the story's title and main character Ciselyn assume that the words "right and proper" are mutually dependent, intertwined concepts; in order for something to be right it must be proper, and anything judged to be proper is automatically right. Ciselyn is an elderly mother of three and her notions about respectability come through strongly in the narrative. The story takes the form of the transcript of a "'how to' speech" Ciselyn gives to her fellow classmates as an assignment for a class she is taking at a community college in inner-city New York, where she now lives after emigrating from Jamaica decades earlier. Though the speech is meant to be five minutes long and pre-written, after an altercation earlier in the day Ciselyn opts to change her pre-determined subject at the last minute and does it "on the fly," far exceeding her time limit (94). As such, the story takes on the form of a stream of consciousness style monologue, through

which the reader is made privy to Ciselyn's innermost thoughts, feelings and insecurities. The incident that inspires Ciselyn's speech is an altercation she observes between what she assumes to be a hard-working, lower middle-class immigrant mother and her rude, disrespectful daughter in a local pharmacy. Ciselyn is so incensed that she approaches the pair, reprimanding the child and encouraging the mother, urging her to use corporal punishment to subdue the child's wilful and inappropriate behaviour.

Colour plays as vital a role as class in the story, as Ciselyn's worldview and interpretation of her surroundings are shaded by her experiences of colorism. Observing the mother and daughter, Ciselyn is exhaustive in her description of the young girl's appearance: "her hair is so tall and nice. Tall down almost to her bottom. And when you talk about wavy and thick. And don't talk about shine. And to top it off, she have a beauty spot on her cheek beside her nose. Have an Italian look. Pretty girl in her green plaid uniform" (96). The daughter's long, shiny hair and exotic beauty are both beautiful and offensive to Ciselyn, as she sees them as signs of the girl's assumed superiority over her mother, who is dressed shabbily and appears downtrodden by comparison. This resonates with Ciselyn because colour issues are implicated in her experience of parenthood as well.

Ciselyn's observation of the "rude and out of order" child (95) reminds her of her experience with her daughter Karen, who came dangerously close to exhibiting the same inappropriate behaviour in her teenage years. Ciselyn's ex-husband and the father of her children is a Jamaican man whose complexion is so light he could be mistaken for white. He was an alcoholic who died when the children were young, and Ciselyn claims that the only gift he bequeathed them is a "fair complexion to make things a little easier for them in life" (122). This fair complexion becomes a point of contention between Ciselyn and her daughter Karen when one afternoon Karen is missing from where she is meant to be picked up after school. Karen arrives hours later accompanied by a light-skinned wealthy friend named Claudia deMercardo (whose surname hints at her European ancestry and attendant class affiliation). Karen is unrepentant about her disobedience and exhibits an unprecedented haughtiness that Ciselyn interprets as condescension and a sense of her own superiority. As a dark skinned Jamaican woman of humble origins, Ciselyn is devastated to see the discrimination she has so often experienced in her public life

now enter her private domain within her own family. She is even more incensed to witness one of her children on the precipice of “turning wutless” after all she has done to secure middle-class status for her family. When she recovers from the emotional and psychological shock, she “corrects” Karen’s behaviour in a violent scene of physical abuse masquerading as discipline.

“Working Class Made Good”

It can be said that both Ciselyn and Helen share a motto: as Ciselyn says, “I don’t like lose. I was born to lose in life, but I find a way to win. So I not going go back to lose again” (113). The root of both women’s insecurities is in their upbringing. Because of their working-class origins and racial heritage, both Helen and Ciselyn are born at a disadvantage. They are barred from access to the educational and cultural institutions that would allow them to raise their status either because of their colour or their poverty or the combination of the two. The “way to win” they are able to secure is bolstered by the appearance of respectability they maintain. This allows them to portray their working-class backgrounds as stumbling blocks they overcome on the route to the self-made success they have secured for themselves and their children.

Unlike Helen, who hides her origins for much of her life, Ciselyn includes hers in the “working class made good” narrative she tells about her life. Ciselyn shares that her mother worked in a candy factory and her father was a postman. To illuminate the measure of their poverty, Ciselyn points out that in 1930s Jamaica it was not like in the US “where if you are a postman you can live a decent life. Down there [in Jamaica] they use to pay the postman like he was a child riding a bicycle and all they had to do was give him pocket change” (106). To counter this narrative of humble origins, she proudly includes references to her current success, reminding her audience that she is “coming from very far,” so “you mightn’t believe” her humble beginnings because of how financially stable her life currently is (107). When she describes the one room home she lived in with her parents and seven siblings, she is careful to mention that they “[kept] it clean” (107), revealing her insecurities about the stereotypical association between poverty and dirtiness. Ciselyn’s willingness to share her humble upbringing can be attributed to her desire to portray herself as a “self-made woman” who has overcome incredible odds to achieve her current success.

Peter Wilson (1969:82) sheds light on what he observes to be the predicament of the poor in the Caribbean:

A young Caribbean 'peasant' cannot become 'respectable' in part because he cannot participate economically or politically in the total societal system within which 'respectability' is the chief value. He is not literate and thus cannot enter the bureaucracy or the political or legal hierarchy. He is unskilled and hence cannot begin to climb the economic status ladder to achieve an income that will permit him to assume the signs of respectability. But at the same time he is politically, legally and economically under the rule of the total society, and those who impress this rule on him are alien--of a different 'class' and/or a different race and/or a different nationality. From this situation arises the circumventions, the misunderstandings, and the real differences reflected in conduct and values.

As such, Ciselyn's concept of respectability as her chief value is born out of her experience of poverty. Her route to circumvention is via education. She is able to achieve more schooling than any of her seven siblings because of her wits, and after she is forced to drop out and start working in a factory because she can no longer afford school, she earns her degree via correspondence. When Ciselyn attempts to translate her academic achievement into professional advancement, she encounters challenges on two fronts (110):

What I want is to apply for a office job. But I know the people who work up there won't give me a chance because I work in the plant and I'm not fair skin. Not that I try, but they wouldn't even let me see a application if I ask them. I know how they stay.

Ciselyn's working-class status coupled with her dark complexion are stumbling blocks in her pursuit of career advancement. The light-skinned, middle-class employees at the plant wield their power over her to keep her and others like her from advancing into more visible, higher status clerical positions. To circumvent this classism and colorism, Ciselyn appeals to the white British owner, Mr. Parnell. She "put[s] [her]self together spic-and-span" and approaches him directly, showing him the grades she has earned and convincing him to hire her (109). It is meaningful that in the face of such overt prejudice by her fellow colleague, whose blackness is presumably only a few shades lighter, Ciselyn is forced to seek the assistance of a white man. In order to win his favour, she dresses in a manner she hopes will be deemed respectable by his standards and carries along her grades as evidence of her intelligence. She points out that the British are "strict," and uses her ability to appeal to Mr. Parnell's code of respectability to override any racist inclinations he may have. Ciselyn asks Mr. Parnell to assess her performance after a week himself rather than allowing any of his staff to do it for fear of sabotage because as she says,

“they don’t want all like me to work up there because my skin too dark” (110). This infers that while the other blacks in the office may not be willing to see past her dark skin despite how respectable she may be in other regards, Ciselyn feels she has a better chance with Mr. Parnell, whose whiteness may make it such that he views all blacks as equal to each other. Eventually she is able to secure a well-paying office job working for Mr. Parnell in addition to another bookkeeping job elsewhere, the combination of which affords her the financial security to buy a home in a middle-class neighbourhood, her crowning accomplishment.

Helen’s rural background is equally humble, but unlike Ciselyn, who sees hers as a source of pride, Helen views her rural upbringing as a source of shame. Her dark-skinned mother worked in the same shoe factory where her light-skinned father worked as the foreman in their rural village. Later in life, after her husband’s death, Helen’s mother works as a maid for a family in Constantia, an upscale neighbourhood in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. When Helen moves to Cape Town, her journey towards becoming respectable begins with a name change from her maiden name Karelse to the anglicised form, “Charles,” “since nice coloured people, those with at least good hair, would have nothing to do with Afrikaans” (128). The Afrikaans suffix “-se” in Karelse is a “nasty possessive” that indicates that her ancestors may have once been the property of an owner named “Karel,” suggesting a history of slavery (128). For Helen this is the first step on the official road to ridding herself of her coloured origins and donning the cloak of whiteness. Shortly thereafter she marries John, whose surname, Campbell, she sees as “a respectable English name” (130). Together the two of them embark on a lifelong journey, steered by Helen, to obliterate any evidence of their humble, coloured background.

Keeping up Appearances

Slipping into the realm of the middle class is facilitated for Helen and John by their light complexions. This is one key difference between Helen and Ciselyn’s experience. Because of South Africa’s apartheid system, racial re-classification, though difficult to obtain, once secured guarantees a wealth of opportunity. In Ciselyn’s circumstance, there are no means by which to acquire whiteness. Instead, she must assimilate and ascribe to the standards of respectable behaviour which allow her to be seen as black, but better than black. The appearance of financial

security helps her to achieve this, but her position is never secure. Notably, security eludes the Campbell family as well, which is why Helen works so hard to police their appearance and behaviour. Because they are both light enough to be mistaken for white, they take advantage of this to secure themselves jobs reserved for whites, Helen as a saleslady at a fine linen shop and John at the traffic department. Helen is described as “fair skinned and rosy cheeked, with copper-coloured hair and a cuprous flexibility to match” (128). She highly prizes the phenotypic features she possesses that approximate the appearance of whiteness and wears pinkish “pancake make-up” to maintain it (152). Apartheid legislation allows for her to formalise this de facto whiteness in a way that Ciselyn never can. However, this formalisation requires extreme sacrifice; Helen submits to the sexual abuse of a white government official in exchange for identity cards documenting their whiteness. The manner through which their promotion is attained leaves them permanently vulnerable to discovery. This vulnerability bears a similarity to Ciselyn’s insecurity, as neither of them are able to rest securely in their newfound class position.

For Helen and Ciselyn, their claim to the cultural capital they have acquired through their transition from working- to middle-class remains illegitimate. Lawler uses Bourdieu’s theories of symbolic capital and habitus to analyse the experience of white British women who have moved from working-class to middle-class (1999). Her research reveals that though the women acquire the trappings of middle-class life, they never come to a point of ease at which they are assured of their own “middle-classness.” Lawler suggests that working class identity is “inscribed into the self, so that the self, itself is class marked” (1999:3). Understood in these terms, class becomes inherent to one’s identity and therefore resists ‘escape,’ at least in the way that Ciselyn and Helen hope to escape it. “Legitimated cultural capital is constituted as a property of the self,” meaning that if one is lacking legitimated cultural capital, that lack is conveyed as a lack in the self (Lawler, 1999:18). It is borne personally and inscribed on the body, not on the social system in which it operates. The naturalisation of this inscription of class identity onto the self causes shame because shame is occasioned by lack within the self, except in this case “it is not what you own but *who you are* that can be exposed and uncovered” (Lawler, 1999:18). As with the women featured in Lawler’s study, Helen and Ciselyn’s experiences reveal that their class origin is inscribed on their bodies and on their selves, in a way that they are unable to shake.

The embodiment of this resistance is exemplified by the layer of crust on Helen's feet, a consequence of her barefoot, rural childhood. Now as a genteel city lady she keeps her feet hidden in stockings and shoes to keep the shame of her humble upbringings from coming to light. In her analysis of the experience of shame, Sarah Ahmed talks about the way shame manifests physically on the body: "Shame consumes the subject and burns on the surface of bodies that are presented to others, a burning that exposes the exposure, and which may be visible in the form of a blush, depending on the skin of the subject, which might or might not show shame through this 'colouring' (2004:104). Though Helen is light enough for blushing to show on her cheeks, her shame does not manifest in this way. She has trained herself to repress those expressions of her shame which she has the power to control, but the skin beneath her feet resists these attempts. Though her husband regularly engages in a tender ritual of scraping the crust away, the thick, tough layer Helen refers to as "her *bête noir*" grows back after only a matter of weeks (147). Helen describes her feet's recurrent regrowth of the shameful calloused layer as her body's form of persistent 'rememory' (148):

The astonishing memory of skin: there was patently no longer any need for this hide. Surely the body, she thought, could forget its past, could allow her to forget the unshod coloured child. But no, it wouldn't; nature would assert itself. To her shame, the skin, like any weed, grew more vigorously in spring, bubbling here and there, moulting as a tough new layer pushed its way through. If Helen was affronted by the continuous production of redundant, leathery skin, by the obstinate reproduction of cells, by the body's refusal to acknowledge the new woman, she found herself inexplicably moved, humbled, by the pile of yellowish-grey shavings.

The rejection of Helen's attempt to reinvent herself is not attributed to the denial of an external force, but to the *self*. Her body refuses to accept her performance and manifests its rebellion physically. In response, Helen beats back the growth like a weed, but its perenniality resists her. This is another example of the skin, the physical terrain of the body, resisting its own rejection. Her racial difference is thereby epidermalised by this persistent regrowth, reminding her that despite her performed racial identity, there are deeper resonances that exist beyond who she pretends to be (Fanon, 2008). As Michelle Stephens puts forth, "the skin reminds us of ourselves in a way that differs from how we think about ourselves in the abstract; the skin brings us back in touch with ourselves, literally, as bodies" (2014:1). Much of who Helen presumes herself to be exists in her mind, and she attempts to modify her body and behaviour to meet this imagined ideal. But her body does not play along. Instead, it reminds her of her shoeless childhood,

humbling her and causing her imagined self to collide with another version of herself that she refuses to acknowledge.

While Helen's feet are a hidden reminder of her origins, for Ciselyn, her dark complexion and African phenotype serve as unavoidable physical evidence of her outsider status in the Jamaican middle-class strata. Ciselyn engages in her own rituals to suppress the parts of her that are not in keeping with the image of respectability she aspires to (129):

In those days, I use to part my hair in the middle and flip it up like Doris Day. But it was hard to manage, you see. I had to press it every Friday evening. If I miss a Friday, it would get coarse and unruly, and all the straightening would come out. I look at my cheeks, and they look so hard, so--what's the word again? --*pronounced*, even though I dab a little rouge on them. They look so unladylike, so tough. Then I begin to examine my nose. For all the times I use to clamp it, it was still the same...spread out like a van run it over, or a big truck lick it down. And the blue eyeshadow? It only advertise how I was black.

Ciselyn's coarse hair, high cheekbones, wide nose and dark skin cannot appear ladylike and refined because those characteristics are associated with a whiteness she can never attain. As a black woman, "roughness" is inscribed on her skin. Her body is encoded by the history of slavery and colonialism that marks her as unfeminine and subhuman. As a (former) working-class woman, this negative stigma is compounded as one of "the several, interrelated, socially constructed controlling images of black womanhood, each reflecting the dominant group's interest in maintaining Black women's subordination" (Collins, 2002:72). Patricia Hill Collins underscores the way women like Ciselyn experience their subordination as defined by interlocking forms of patriarchy. In Ciselyn's case, as a woman she is compelled to work twice as hard as her male counterparts to exude respectability because she must also simultaneously negate the controlling images projected onto her female body.

Chasing British Respectability

Helen also contends with controlling images of coloured femininity but she does so covertly since her coloured heritage remains a secret. However, the fact that Helen's racial heritage is a secret makes her no less paranoid or compulsive in her pursuit. As Lawler suggests, though no one else knows, the fact that Helen herself knows that she is "inhabiting of the 'wrong' habitus" (1999:18) is a compelling enough force to drive her to obsession. She determines to "settle for no

less than respectable whiteness” (Wicomb, 2006:131), which is embodied not by the Afrikaner model of whiteness, but by the version exemplified by the British, which she deems to be “brightest;” Helen’s work in a “fine linen shop had alerted her to the many shades of whiteness, and there was no need to settle for anything other than the brightest” (128). The distinction between “lightest” and “brightest” indicates that not only are the British viewed as a “lighter” form of white than Afrikaners (whose traditional association with farming has a similar connotation to the “rednecks” of the American south), but the form of whiteness conveyed by association with the British is “brighter” – it is more intellectual, sophisticated, upper-class and genteel. It is the supreme height of whiteness.

Because Helen’s ultimate goal is to become like the British, her husband’s satisfaction with being mistaken for a Boer upsets her. “Why, she pleaded at first, why settle for being Boer when you could be anything at all? By which she meant English” (127). Helen’s distinction between these two competing forms of imperial whiteness echoes the history of the union of South Africa and the tensions between British colonialism and the Boer republic. Choosing to align her newly minted “white version” of herself with the British, she admonishes her husband John that he must do the same: he “must be able to pass as English, or at least try to keep a foot in both camps” (130). The primary tool Helen employs in establishing this distinction is language; “Polished and self-assured, her Afrikaans vowels grew rounder and drawn out as a lady’s, while her English came on very nicely thanks to the SABC” (125). Helen’s rejection of Afrikanerdom can also be read as a form of rebellion against apartheid, as Afrikaners are seen to be the active drivers of the institutionalisation of apartheid, while white South Africans of British ancestry are typically viewed as passive beneficiaries.

As a fellow citizen of the “British Commonwealth,” Ciselyn displays a similar preoccupation with particularly British modes of expressing respectability. The exemplar of Britishness in her eyes is her boss Mr. Parnell, who she views as a fair, strict, and upstanding example of British success. One of Ciselyn’s stereotypes of the British is her conviction that Englishmen like Mr. Parnell “worship time” (Channer, 2006:117), and she adopts a similar reverence for timeliness in order to meet the demands of her busy life as a single mother.

Policing Respectability

The climax of Ciselyn's story is instigated by an instance of lateness that threatens to upend the strict schedule that keeps her and her children's life on track. After school one afternoon in 1972, her daughter Karen is not where she is supposed to be when Ciselyn arrives to pick her up from school, and Ciselyn is nearly driven mad by the infraction (117). When Ciselyn inquires about Karen's whereabouts from another student she is informed that Karen has accompanied one of her fellow classmates, Claudia deMercardo, to the mall. While she is incensed by Karen's inconsideration, the primary cause for her anger is her assumption that Karen has gone to the mall "to window shop, and walk up and down, and flirt with boys" (118). Because of the stereotypes associated with these acts, Ciselyn deems them inappropriate for a woman of Karen's class and colour. Window shopping displays an affinity for conspicuous consumption, walking up and down indicates idleness, and flirting is associated with sexual immorality and immodesty. While white women may be allowed to do these things (with the exception of flirtation, which patriarchal societies deem to be inappropriate for all women), for a working-class woman of colour they are likely to be interpreted negatively. Reflecting on the Caribbean context in the late 1960s, Peter J. Wilson (1961:71) notes,

Almost every ethnographical report from the Caribbean makes mention of a double standard' of sexual morality. Males are esteemed for their virility and are granted a freedom which they are expected to exploit. Females are, ideally, constrained in their sexual activities before and after marriage, and are expected to observe these constraints and other allied modes of behaviour (such as modesty and obedience).

For this reason, a woman in Karen's precarious social position cannot afford the luxury of these acts. Though her complexion is lighter than her mother's, Ciselyn lumps Karen into the same category as herself, as a woman who must work twice as hard to prove her respectability and worth. Ciselyn describes Karen as acting "Like she was some kind o'... you know... royalty...like she could do anything she want without considering the price" (137). According to Ciselyn, Karen has inaccurately judged her place in the social hierarchy and thereby incites her mother's wrath.

Karen's rudeness and poor judgement becomes a sign to Ciselyn that she is "heading for the gutter fast, fast" (99). A recurring theme in Ciselyn's narrative is her belief that the road to impropriety is a slippery and precarious one that can lure an unsuspecting young woman down it at any time. Her response to this looming danger is vigilance. Her constant policing of her

daughter's behaviour and her own is what she believes prevents them from slipping downward into the "gutter." The class undertones in this way of thinking are overt; Ciselyn has clawed her way into respectable middle-class society and fears that one misstep can undo all the hard work she has done to earn her promotion above the ranks of working class Jamaican society. Ciselyn's outlook is not unique. As Belinda Edmondson (2003:2) points out,

in the Caribbean, with its history of slavery and indentureship, and the corollary pathologizing of black and other nonwhite women as nonwomen or nonsubjects, the black, brown, and Asian constituencies' desire for a publicly acknowledged "respectable" femininity is both overtly and covertly tied to the desire for social mobility and political or economic advancement.

In the Jamaican context in particular, the complicated interplay of colour and class has enshrined a hierarchy that allows little opportunity for dark skinned women. As Austin-Broos argues, in Jamaica "culture, class and race do not merely coincide. They merge as phenotype is rendered through culture; inheritance made potent through environment and experienced inscriptions on the body" (1997:150). Furthermore, as Paul Gilroy points out, the illusion that approximation of certain cultural values and mores will allow one honorary whiteness is just that – an illusion (1987). The appropriation of whiteness does not guarantee acceptance, because without the appearance and heritage of whiteness, one can never completely *embody* the culture. Ciselyn sees it as her responsibility to teach Karen that for women like them, non-white and beneath the elite class, there is a straight and narrow path of decency and obedience that must be tread lightly in order to avoid "the gutter," a term synonymous with poverty.

Ciselyn's interpretation of the particular type of downfall that awaits a young woman like Karen reveals the gendering of the policing of respectability. Ciselyn foresees a life of prostitution before Karen after her unsanctioned jaunt to the mall. Citing the example of her mother, "who was a *Mrs.*" as opposed to "any common-law wife or concubine" (111), Ciselyn reveals that the moral code she has been raised to obey posits wives against concubines. There is no middle ground; either one is a married women with a decent home and family, or an indecent, illegitimate concubine. Ciselyn identifies her mother as the primary conduit of information regarding appropriate behaviour for a young woman (118):

Although my mother wasn't an educated woman, she had a lot o' common sense. And from I was a little girl, I use to hear her say that you have certain signs that wi' tell you if a girl going grow up and behave like a prostitute. And is not just because she's my mother why I agree with her. I take my own two eyes and see it, so I take it as truth...

Any girl that like to walk up and down from store to store after school instead of going home to study, because her eyes are in love with pretty things...and any girl who like to sing in the shower like she want the whole world to get excited that she naked in there-- you take it from me, Ciselyn Thompson, that girl is going to be a prostitute. She have a whoring nature.

This may also reveal Ciselyn's mother's anxieties around appearing respectable despite her lack of education and working-class status. This emphasises that this information is conveyed intergenerationally and repeatedly to young women since childhood. Sexual promiscuity and impropriety are portrayed as inborn traits that can be "spotted." This idea inspires fear and encourages self-policing, because women must constantly monitor their behaviour so they do not accidentally exhibit behaviour that can be interpreted as sexually immodest. Evidence of a "whoring nature" includes aimlessness and hypervisibility in "common" public spaces like shopping malls and an immodest interest in "pretty things" or commercial goods. Ciselyn has internalised this viewpoint and feels that her own observations have borne this out as well.

Accordingly, Ciselyn fears that if she does not "nip" Karen's behaviour "in the bud" (99) she will become a prostitute. She says, "If you don't control them they wi' break away. And when they break away, you can't always catch them back. That's when they end up worthless" (124). The term "worthless" has strong cultural connotations in the Jamaican context. To "tun wutless" (turn/become worthless) is considered to be one of the worst fates for a child growing into adulthood, and connotes an inability or disinterest in caring for oneself and being of use to society, and a refusal to uphold standards of morality and decency. If one's child becomes "worthless," it is an indictment on the parent[s], who's ineptitude and lack of discipline is believed to have caused their child's worthlessness. This explains Ciselyn's fear that Karen's behaviour will become a reflection on her, revealing her to be "a mother who don't train her children right" (143). "Wutlessness" is also often paired with laziness and juxtaposed against being "hardworking and reasonable" (Thomas, 2004:152). As Ciselyn points out, there are particular implications in regards to gender for "wutlessness" (125):

When a boy end up worthless is bad and not too bad. But when a girl end up worthless is a different thing...When a girl begin to feel worthless is a easy thing for her to start act like she worthless in truth. She start to lose her confidence. She start to need attention, especially from men. And this make her start to dress and act a certain way... before you know it the girl start bouncing round the place, and she might even feel as if she having a lot o' fun. But to them she's just a mattress. A place where they lie down and get relief. And from that, is just a matter o' time before she breed and the bastard children start to

come with more than one last name. Of course now, she can't mind them on her own, so she need the man them for support. And you think they going give her support unless she give them back something? And if you give your body for money, you is what? If a man turns worthless in some cases it can be "not too bad," presumably because he can be redeemed by a renewed work ethic and a "decent" marriage. A woman who becomes worthless however, is expected to have subjected herself to sexual objectification and compromised her morals to an irredeemable point. The burden of her fall from grace will also be unavoidably evidenced by the children she will bear, each with different fathers evidenced by their different last names. This stereotype is also typically linked to lower-class women, who are often assumed to be unwed mothers with multiple partners. Ciselyn is committed to protecting Karen from this fate.

Karen is juxtaposed against her accomplice Claudia, who Ciselyn refers to as "a damn mattress" because of her reputation for promiscuity (119). Initially Ciselyn's appraisal of the young girl seems harsh, until her true motivation comes to light (120):

[Claudia's] people was real money people. They use to own in-bond stores and gas stations and a car distributorship. Where they use to live had everything, from pool to tennis court. And as far as I knew, people with that kind o' money never really like people who black like me, especially when they *think* they white.

While Ciselyn must work two jobs to barely afford a home in a middle-class neighbourhood, the deMercardo's mixed-race background and elite status grant them access to wealth Ciselyn could never attain. Because the economic hierarchy in Jamaica has historically been determined primarily by race, Ciselyn views the realm the deMercardo's occupy as inaccessible to her. She assumes they are racist though there has been no evidence to support this assumption and takes pleasure in outing them as "not really white" despite their pretence. Faced with the deMercardo's wealth, Ciselyn assumes that they must be "slack" (of low moral standard) because they allow Claudia so much freedom, and determines that "slack parents make all kind o' slack things go on in their house" (120). Because she cannot outdo them financially, Ciselyn positions herself against the deMercardo's as occupying staid, middle-class moral high ground of running a "decent" home, while the wealthy engage in moral depravity.

Colour plays a significant role in Ciselyn's evaluation of the deMercardo's and disapproval of her daughter's friendship with Claudia. She discourages Karen from befriending Claudia and

allowing her to corrupt her and lead her astray. She instructs Karen that “Claudia deMercardo and those fair-skin girls she know from school don’t have to pass no exam to get ahead in life. As soon as they finish school their parents giving them a job in a business...They not like me and you! People like me and you *must* have a profession” (120-121; italics in original). This instruction invokes the lessons Granny Ivy reinforces in her granddaughter in Zee Edgell’s novel *Beka Lamb* (1982). According to Ciselyn, the privileges that accompany light skin, such as accelerated professional advancement and increased likelihood of marrying a wealthy husband, are not guaranteed for women with dark skin, so they must work harder to earn wealth and status and establish themselves as unquestionably deserving of promotion.

By emphasising their similarity Ciselyn also reminds Karen that her slightly lighter complexion does not give her the right to look down on her mother. This implies that the strength of their class affiliation supersedes the colour difference, suggesting that class is an even more powerful force than colour. Karen seems to have forgotten this when she belittles and looks down on her mother. As Ciselyn notes (128),

The thing itself that was depressing me was how she talk to me--like how most people talk to their maid. Is like she feel like she could talk to me anyhow and nothing wouldn’t come out of it cause I don’t have any status in life. Like I’m just this little dark girl who is right where she start out, and don’t reach nowhere, like I not good enough to be her mother.

Karen’s behaviour as a light-skinned woman towards her dark-skinned mother reminds Ciselyn of her former position in society, which she has worked so hard to surpass. The measure of success and comfort she has eked out has been erased by her daughter’s haughtiness. The middle-class niche she has struggled to carve out for herself has been reduced to domestic work, a role reserved for the lower classes. Notably, this demotion of status becomes “no status” in Ciselyn’s eyes, compounded by her not being “good enough to be [Karen’s] mother” (129).

Ciselyn is driven into a deep depression by the shame she feels at Karen’s rejection. During this episode, she is lost and hopeless, having found the hard-won gains of a lifetime of labour swept away by her daughter’s haughtiness. Being reminded that an educated, well paid dark-skinned woman in a nice neighbourhood is still just a dark-skinned black woman in the eyes of a brown person is devastating. She finds that the lifelong investment she has made, banking on the promise that respectability will gain her equality and respect, has been wasted. This inspires a

painful realisation: “*Jesus Christ, I thought, you know you really, really black? Why you bother even try with makeup base? That kind o’ black can’t hide. You black like doctor never take you from your mother belly. Like him grab you from a clinic that was burning down...*” (129; italics in original). Juxtaposed against her own heightened awareness of her blackness, Karen’s hazel eyes and long, light brown hair stands in judgment of her mother’s appearance, and Ciselyn’s “shame [is] impressed upon the skin, as an intense feeling of the subject ‘being against itself’” (Ahmed, 2004:103). Ciselyn feels as though as a dark skinned black woman she not only *feels* shame but she *embodies* shame. As Sarah Ahmed (2004:105) points out,

Crucially, the individuation of shame – the way it turns the self against and towards the self – can be linked precisely to the inter-corporeality and sociality of shame experience. The ‘apartness’ of the subject is intensified in the return of the gaze; apartness is felt in the moment of exposure to others, an exposure that is wounding.

Difference is therefore highlighted by and through shame, as the onlooker’s gaze (in this case, Karen’s) serves to “other” Ciselyn as the appraised, reinforcing her difference and inadequacy and leaving her vulnerable and exposed by this observation. Because “shame...is only felt given that the subject is interested in the other; that is, that a prior love or desire for the other exists”, Ciselyn’s shame is intensified by the fact that in this case, her rejection comes from her own daughter (Ahmed, 2004:105).

Ciselyn’s internalisation of Karen’s denunciation first causes her to feel bad about herself and internalise a sense of her own ‘badness’; “In shame, more than my action is at stake: *the badness of an action is transferred to me*, such that I feel myself to be bad and to have been ‘found’ or ‘found out’ as bad by others” (Ahmed, 2004:105; italics in original). To externalise this emotion, she turns this anger on Karen, who she hears singing “shamelessly” in the shower. She uses this opportunity to beat Karen while she is naked, exposed, and vulnerable in the shower, transferring her own shame onto her daughter. As Ciselyn disciplines Karen, she is beating her for thinking she is better than she is-- for “passing [her] place” (146). Karen also becomes a stand in for an entire system of discrimination and oppression - as a brown woman, she represents all that Ciselyn is excluded from. Ciselyn refers to the extension cord she beats Claudia with as her “little cat-o’-nine” (144). The scene becomes an inversion of the master/slave relationship, where the power has shifted and the disempowered seizes control. Initially, Karen is emboldened by her newfound sense of superiority over her mother, but by the end of the scene, Karen is cowed,

begging for mercy. The scene is brutal, and Ciselyn feels justified in the measure of brutality. Through this violent act she is able to reassert her own power and suppress the feelings of depression and anxiety she experiences after finding her pursuit of respectability to be ineffective.

The disciplinary act also reminds Karen of her position in the social hierarchy. Her jaunt with Claudia leaves her temporarily displaced, feeling superior to her mother on the basis of colour, despite their similar class position. Ciselyn reminds her that this is not acceptable, and she advises parents in similar situations to do the same: “hold your ground! Push them back. Sink them down again below the grass, and stand up over them like you have a machete in your hand. If they push they head again before they time, don’t hesitate. Take on swing and chop it off” (100). The violence of this analogy is not coincidental. The flower analogy calls to mind the way the titular character is compared with the bougainvillea in her front yard in *Beka Lamb* (1982). Similarly, Beka’s bougainvillea is violently cut down as a corrective and punitive measure in response to Beka’s disobedience. The common reference to a daughter as a “flower in your garden” is here invoked for the purpose of discipline; this flower must be pruned regularly, and if need be cut down almost entirely to ensure that it grows according to the rules of the home. As such, Ciselyn instructs her audience on “how to grab ahold of them and straighten them out” (106). Ciselyn’s justification is solidified by the fact that Karen eventually becomes a successful, highly respected business woman. Ciselyn informs the class that she has just come from a luncheon held in Karen’s honour at a “fancy place” so upscale that “when you walk in there you see class” (95). Ultimately, Karen’s success is attributed to Ciselyn’s strict and mindful mothering.

In *Playing in the Light*, respectability becomes synonymous with whiteness, the ideal to which Helen aspires (2006). The novel expounds on the chimerical and unattainable nature of the ephemeral goal of “whiteness” for someone who is not born into its privilege. As an outsider, Helen views whiteness as liberating, empowering and attainable. “Whiteness is without restrictions. It has the fluidity of milk; its glow is far-reaching. It’s up to them to make it work” (151). Though Helen glorifies whiteness as the key to freedom, her life experience reveals her pursuit of it to be a prison. In this world (152),

Vigilance is everything; to achieve whiteness is to keep on your toes. Which, John reasons, indicates that they cannot achieve it after all; being white in the world is surely about being at ease, since the world belongs to you. But they, it would seem, cannot progress beyond vigilance, in other words, beyond being play-whites, which as far as he can see has bugger-all to do with playing.

Helen is penned in by an endless and ever-changing list of rules that govern what is “decent” and how people with class ought to speak and behave. Rather than finding freedom she finds restriction on “a small new island of whiteness” (152).

The complexities of apartheid legislation play a key role in perpetually deferring Helen’s dream of comfortably attaining whiteness. Like the chimera of whiteness itself, this complex matrix of laws appear to have been designed as purposefully obscure, to allow for interpretations that best suit the government on a case-by-case basis. This is revealed when Helen’s daughter Marion goes to the library to research “play whites” after discovering her mother’s secret. Despite the many entries she finds, none address the particular issue of “passing” with which she is now personally concerned. She finds that “play-whites” are invisible in the recorded history, laws and literature of South Africa. This absence from the archive serves to erase people like Helen from the annals of history, allowing the narrative of apartheid to be presented as an efficient and effective system without anomalies. Wicomb’s text rejects this erasure, centring the story of the Campbell family to destabilise apartheid’s historical narrative of total obedience to racial classification. During Marion’s investigation of the archive, she is confounded by the opaque wording of apartheid legislation. Whiteness is alternately described as a matter of appearance but also of “acceptance.” According to Act No. 30 of 1950, a white person is “one who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person” (121). By this measure, people like Helen would have found themselves entirely at the mercy of others. Her whiteness, while visually unquestionable because of her European phenotype, can be called into question if her peers do not “accept” her into the fraternity of whiteness.

A further clarification of this act ratified in 1962 extends the requirement of appearance and acceptance to include a provision for heritage: the category of “white” “does not include any person who for the purposes of classification under this Act, freely and voluntarily admits that he

is by descent a native or a coloured person unless it is proved that the admission is not based on fact” (121). This provision suggests that one’s declaration of so-called native or coloured heritage could be ignored if a court of law determines it to be untrue. Both Marion and the librarian find this laughable: “In vain they try to stifle the sound; they stagger drunkenly between the aisles before sliding with the heavy tomes onto the carpeted floor, where they rock with quiet laughter. Tears stream down their faces. There are decade’s worth of folly trapped in these pages” (121). The absurdity of these ambiguous and equivocal terms is surpassed only by the measure of seriousness with which they were upheld. Helen’s conspiracy to circumvent this can be interpreted as an attempt to claim some measure of agency in a situation in which she is largely powerless; because she cannot change apartheid legislation, she outsmarts it. However, the lengths she must go to achieve this small victory reveal that her coup is not without cost.

The route through which Helen achieves her racial reclassification from coloured to white is replete with race, gender and class discrimination. Councillor Carter, the government official from whom Helen requests an affidavit affirming her white heritage, is a lower-middle-class white man who is anxious about distinguishing himself from the “criminal and lower classes” (138). When he and Helen first meet, he has just returned from a meeting with his supervisor, a British man whose sense of “English superiority” and condescension leaves Carter feeling belittled, despite the fact that “his own people” are supposedly “of good English stock” (139). Carter’s anxieties about his own class position make him hyper-vigilant and exceptionally observant of the same insecurities in others. He notes Helen’s tanned complexion and prominent cheekbones and appears to be aware immediately that she is not the white woman she presents herself to be. He sees her “plain gold wedding ring [and] cheap engagement ring” as further proof that she will not be “immune to his admiration” (139). Helen’s lower-class, racial status and gender make her prey to Carter as a white, professional male. He decides to take advantage of this vulnerability by requiring sexual favours in exchange for feigned ignorance.

Helen’s response to Carter’s inappropriate sexual advances is to overcompensate with behaviour she hopes will be interpreted as respectable and ladylike. She sits “with her legs at an angle and crossed at the ankles,” following the “instructions in her well-thumbed etiquette book” (139). She initially refuses to present herself to him as seductive, hoping that her innocence will

discourage his advances. Carter is immune to these attempts and continues to view Helen solely as a sexual object ripe for his exploitation. Eventually, committed to the end goal she has set, Helen succumbs, feigning interest and enjoyment in the sexual encounter in exchange for a document affirming her whiteness.

Throughout her various encounters with Carter and her journey towards being officially declared white, Helen meditates on the recurring image of a sunflower. She sees all that she must endure to achieve her goal as “a matter of endurance, of being strong and keeping her weary head high at all costs, like the bright face of the sunflower following the radiance of the sun, even if it drooped by the end of the day. That was what Mamma called her, a bright sunflower” (142). The sunflower leans towards the “light” as Helen imagines herself to be leaning towards whiteness, and the experience of basking in the light is worth the inevitable drooping. Notably, Helen’s mother is the one who calls her attention to her own similarity to a sunflower, and the connection between her light-skinned self and a “bright” yellow flower is what sustains Helen throughout the humiliating experience with Carter. In the most lewd and explicit of their encounters, “She stood tall as a sunflower with her hands at her sides and thought of the fold-up canvas bed while he licked and pummelled and muttered about blackberries” (144). The sunflower imagery recurs once the deed is complete: When her new identity card arrives, “Helen, artless as a sunflower, smiled warmly; her former self – the woman...obligated to Carter – was obliterated, was no more” (145). She considers herself to have been “reborn” as a white woman. In this way, she can compartmentalise the encounter, imagining the act of defilement as having happened to the old, coloured version of herself, while the white version emerges pure and unscathed (144).

Paradoxically, Helen reinforces stereotypes of coloured female lasciviousness, sexual availability and indecency in this culminating act of achieving her stamp of respectability through whiteness. As Pumla Gqola points out in the introduction to her book *Rape: A South African Nightmare* (2015:4-5),

The same white supremacy that constructed the stereotype of Black man as rapist, created the stereotype of Black woman as hypersexual and therefore impossible to rape. Making Black women *impossible* to rape does not mean making them *safe* against rape. It means quite the opposite: that Black women are safe to rape, that raping them does not count as harm and is therefore permissible.

It can be argued that Gqola's use of the word "black" in the South African context encompasses coloured female identity in this instance because of the shared experience of gendered sexual exploitation. She sheds light on the ways that the institution of slavery allowed for women of colour to be viewed and treated as less valuable than their white counterparts and sexually available. As Sean Samson argues, "lacking in roots and 'pure' origin, the coloured woman's 'base' sexual characteristics are seen as inherent" (2014:88). Assumptions regarding the sexual indecency of coloured women are rooted in the colonial encounter, and the example of Sarah Baartman bears witness to the ways that coloured female sexuality has been historically exploited and misrepresented. Councillor Carter's abuse of Helen's vulnerability follows in this trend of abuse of power. It also simultaneously ratifies and delegitimises Helen's claims at respectability. This, compounded by the lack of legitimate basis for her claim to whiteness, leaves Helen's respectability permanently precarious.

To counter this insecurity, like Ciselyn, Helen must work even harder to assert herself as respectable. This manifests in a fierce obsession with control over her family and their behaviour. As a young newly married woman Helen fears becoming pregnant because giving birth to a dark child will reveal her coloured heritage. Helen views her unborn child as "an uninvited guest, arriving with an extraordinarily large, cheap suitcase that bumped along through the birth canal" (134). She fears that her child's body will be evidence of her history, the weight of hundreds of years of mixed ancestry evidenced through her hair texture, complexion and facial features. Like her calloused feet, which insistently regrow their shameful thick crust revealing her poor, shoeless childhood, Helen is afraid that her genes will resist her attempt to suppress her origins and reveal her secret through her unborn child. Both Helen's mother and brother have dark skin, which further exacerbates her concern that her DNA might collapse her project of racial performativity. Though John assures her that "there [is] nothing to worry about [because] his people had good European blood," Helen worries that the birth of their child may sabotage the life she has crafted (125):

By the time the child arrived with pale skin and smooth hair she was too addicted to anxiety to be relieved. Helen foresaw further problems: the child's hair would grow into a mass of frizzy curls; she would be slow to learn, mentally retarded; she would become a kaffirboetie – until she decided that such ironies need not be taken lying down, that she would fight back. The child at least would not be racked by fear and insecurity. She would grow up in ignorance, a perfectly ordinary child who would take her whiteness,

her privileges, for granted. Far from being punished, Helen would see her project completed in the child.

Helen thinks it is “wonderful to see [Marion] grow up so confident in her whiteness” (132). She sees Marion as the fulfilment of her dream – a white child untainted by any knowledge, appearance or behaviour that can be linked to coloured identity.

As Marion grows, Helen restricts her behaviour persistently, discouraging any conduct she views as indecent or uncivilised because such behaviour could potentially out the Campbells as “play whites.” Helen’s concerns are inspired by the prevailing stereotypes of coloureds in South Africa. Because of the association between coloured people and the indigenous Khoi of South Africa, and the common slang term of “Boesman” (Bushman) used to refer to coloureds, Helen works hard to fight against any association to “primitive” behaviour. She goes to extremes to maintain the appearance of respectability and decency, even refusing to “eat a banana from its half-peeled skin [because] that was what primitives and primates did, although she had not as yet tried tackling it with a knife and fork” (139). She insists on “proper behaviour” at all times, chastening her husband for speaking with food in his mouth (9). She applies the same rules to her daughter. As a child Marion undresses in the back garden of their home to stave off the heat of a summer’s evening and imagines herself to be “a mermaid under the moon, diving and tossing her tail through the silver waves” (60). When Helen sees her, she is filled with “rage and disgust. What kind of child was she? Where had she come from? How could she behave like a disgusting native, rolling half naked in the grass?” (60). Marion’s nakedness represents a primitiveness that Helen associates with “disgusting natives” and behaviour she will not tolerate even without the presence of outsiders. It is important to Helen that Marion’s behaviour be so far from what can be associated with the “natives” that she does not slip out of character, even in the privacy of their own home.

In addition to her fear of appearing uncivilised, Helen works diligently not to appear “low class.” She despises anything that might appear kitsch or tacky, because that will reveal that she is not of genuine middle-class white stock. As such, when a chic customer in the trousseau shop where she works refers to plastic flowers as “vulgar,” Helen is horrified and adamantly demands that the company that delivers a new bouquet of artificial flowers to her home every Friday cease to do so and come and pick up their most recently delivered bouquet immediately (6):

Her head kept on nodding like a mechanical toy; she said over and over that it had been a mistake, only a mistake. No, she had no complaints about the quality of service, she said to the saleswoman, and no, she definitely couldn't wait until Friday. And then Helen's voice grew shrill and hysterical as she threatened to put the flowers in the dustbin that instant, so that a coloured chap on an inferior motorcycle arrived within half an hour... Only then did she stop nodding.

Petrified that her decision to keep fake flowers in her house will be interpreted as a sign of her lower-class origins, she deems it a "mistake" which must be corrected immediately. She becomes increasingly panicked that her mistake will be discovered and her charade unveiled. The representative for the company who comes to pick up the flowers is notably described as coloured and is riding an "inferior" motorcycle, further signalling the non-whiteness and low standard of the artificial flowers Helen had once loved. The likening of Helen's head and behaviour to a "mechanical toy" emphasises that she is at the mercy of the opinions of those she considers to be more legitimate than herself, nodding in agreement with the suggestions of these gatekeepers of whiteness.

Like Ciselyn, Helen identifies her mother Tokkie as the most important source of information regarding respectability and the superiority of whiteness. Tokkie is the only family member with whom Helen maintains contact, primarily because she supports her decision. Tokkie relishes the Eurocentric physical features her daughter acquires from her light-skinned father: doting "on her pale-skinned, skinny child with rosy cheeks and tints of copper in her hair" (132). Tokkie not only condones but encourages Helen's racial shift and willingly dresses like a servant to strengthen her daughter's alibi (132):

It was [Tokkie's] idea to wear the funny wrap-around apron when she came to visit at the new terraced house, to use the back gate; that way in the role of a servant, she could visit every week and at the same time provide a history of an old family retainer, which the types who were working their way up in that part of Observatory could not boast of. Tokkie advises Helen "on matters of decor and taste" (133) which she learns from the white family she works for in the upscale neighbourhood of Constantia, and regards her daughter's racial reclassification as a promotion. This information helps to situate Helen's obsession with whiteness, like Ciselyn's, in a continuum beginning with her mother, which she then continues with her own daughter.

Another notable similarity between Helen and Ciselyn's narrative is the punishment of another character to highlight the consequences of disobedience. One of the defining moments of Marion's childhood is a latent memory she refers to as "The Betrayal of Annie Boshoff" (193). The white father of Marion's childhood best friend Annie is caught in the midst of an interracial sex act with a coloured woman, and later reveals that he is coloured and would like to be reclassified as such so he can continue his extramarital relationship. Annie Boshoff's family is forced to move out of the neighbourhood in a cloud of scandal after being reclassified as coloured. Helen uses the incident to instruct Marion about sexual propriety. The young woman is made out to be the villain by the community instead of the married man and her picture is published in the newspaper. Helen refers to her as "the little trollop" and warns Marion not to follow the example of "these coloured girls" who know "how to tempt a man, to ruin his life" (194). Helen's claims that "the family deserved the scandal, the just deserts for unlawful behaviour" (194) indicate that she is unaware of her own hypocrisy. The act the young woman has participated in is not unlike her own transgression with Councillor Carter, but Helen ignores this as she casts judgement. In the same way that Ciselyn bars Karen from socialising with Claudia deMercardo, Helen informs Marion that she must never see Annie Boshoff again, lest she be contaminated by the family's immorality. The effect of these characters, Claudia deMercardo and Annie Boshoff, is boundary setting. Through the negative examples of their friends and with the reinforcement of their parents, the young women are taught to toe the line of respectability or endure the inevitable punishment.

Conclusion

Though respectability practitioners can access mainstream resources, at what cost do they do so? What community has been lost?... What family? What culture? Safety net? Home? Where can the battered spirit return to, to be healed? (McDougall, 2017)

Both "How to Beat a Child the Right and Proper Way" and *Playing in the Light* are meditations on the psychological cost of the deployment of respectability as a means of mediating oppression (2006). This comparative analysis allows for a comprehensive view of the overlaps of the manifestation of the politics of respectability in the lived experiences of women of colour as they attempt to permeate the middle class. The character's varying historical contexts and racial

designations are distinct, and therefore their stories cannot be conflated. However, there are undoubtedly glaring similarities between their expressions of the politics of respectability. For both women, behaving respectably requires mimicking white, European (and specifically British) ways of being. This is to the detriment of their own cultural mores, which they are co-opted into not only rejecting but also denigrating as a means of affirming their allegiance to whiteness.

The women conceive of racial progression as a linear process, with respectability as the vehicle of advancement. Helen describes her husband's desire to visit his coloured sister for Sunday lunch as "[creeping] right back into the nest of jolly hotnos," a reversion to a past from which they have escaped (Wicomb, 2006:150). In this world, whiteness and coloured identity cannot coexist: "It is not a matter of donning whiteness as you trip daintily out of the house, and then on your return, as you lock the doors, slumping back into your old way – hotnos ways" (151). Helen bequeaths Marion her "achievement" of whiteness, starting "a new generation unburdened by the past" (150). However, the truth haunts Marion, refusing to allow her to live an unburdened life. For Helen and John, even with careful attention to detail, they are never able to achieve the key distinguishing feature of whiteness: its invisibility. Because of this elusiveness, their approximation remains a performance of whiteness, invalidated by its fraudulence. Though they are able to achieve some measure of "progress," reiterating a view of whiteness as the pinnacle of the continuum towards advancement, they are never able to achieve it completely.

In Ciselyn's view, this progression ought to also be generational, and it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that their children advance beyond their parent's level of success. When she observes children behaving in a manner she considers to be less than respectable, she does not see it as their fault: "sometimes you can't really blame them. When children come like that, is the parent's fault" (98). In the same way that her mother admonishes her against sexual indecency, she takes on the responsibility of interpellating her children, making a promise to God that "all o' [her] three children was going reach further than [her] in life" (112). However, "reaching farther" for Ciselyn means getting as far away from blackness as possible, which she associates with poverty and lower class values.

The texts also reveal that women typically bear the burden of responsibility alone, without the support of their male counterparts. Reflecting on post-war Britain, Carolyn Steedman recalls, “It was the women who told you about the public world, of work and politics, the details of social distinction” (1987:33). The same is noted in the Jamaican context, where Peter Wilson notes that “women participate most extensively in the value complex denoted by 'respectability’” (1969:78). Wilson references Davenport, who refers to Jamaican women as the 'carriers of respectability’” (cited in Wilson 1969:78). This is evidenced by Ciselyn’s view of “wutlessness” as being more hazardous for women, as well as the fact that the lesson she teaches on respectability is reserved for her daughter Karen and does not extend to either of her two sons. She is also a single mother and the sole disciplinarian in the home, so she bears this responsibility alone, without the assistance of her alcoholic husband. Despite the fact that her husband is in the home, Helen also takes on this role in her family. Helen’s husband John “[falls] short of her vision; he did not take the task of reinvention seriously” (126), so “of [him] she could expect nothing” (125). Because John is described as “innocent of the nuances of whiteness,” despite the fact that he willingly goes along with Helen’s plan, she becomes the villain in the story (126). When Marion discovers her mother’s choice, she sees her as “a calculating woman with no conscience, no heart, no shame,” indicating that bearing the responsibility alone also means carrying the blame alone (117).

Helen and Ciselyn spend their lives attempting to counteract the controlling images attached to their race, class and gender. In exchange for presenting themselves as sophisticated, decent ladies, they hope to be rewarded with equal treatment and respect. Ironically, the task of earning and policing their respectability requires behaviour that transgresses the very code they hold dear. Ciselyn’s brutal corporal punishment of her daughter Karen reinforces stereotypes of black irrationality, savagery and violence. Helen must succumb to the sexual advances of a white man to acquire her white identity card, thereby reinforcing stereotypes regarding the sexual availability of coloured women. While this contradiction remains a source of shame for Helen for all her life, Ciselyn is able to recuperate her act as something to be proud of. Ciselyn’s act is viewed positively while Helen’s is irredeemable. Arguably, the difference in interpretation can be attributed to the difference in outcome. Because Ciselyn’s act is successful (as evidenced by Karen’s successful career and gratefulness to her mother for “saving her life”) Ciselyn is

vindicated. In Helen's case however, her daughter discovers her lie and their whiteness remains illegitimate. At the end of the story, it remains unclear whether or not the end Helen experiences justifies the means. As Patricia Hill Collins puts it, "Despite the often remarkable achievement of middle-class Black women, the pain many experience on the way to middle-class respectability, while masked by achievement, is no less real" (2002:161).

The fact that both texts are written in hindsight suggests the possibility of a newfound sense of perspective and freedom in the new dispensation. In the case of *Playing in the Light*, the post-apartheid moment provides the opportunity to pursue questions about race and identity freely: "Illegitimacy is an old-fashioned notion, especially in this county, where everything that once was correct, ordered and legitimate turns out to have been nothing of the kind" (77). The upending of the apartheid regime and the unveiling of the National party's agenda reveals that much of what was once considered taboo can no longer be so in the new South Africa. As such, the unveiling of the Campbell family's history is no longer something to hide, but rather one of the many truths that must be faced in the new era. Ciselyn's reflection on her life in Jamaica from the safety of exile in America decades later allows her to reflect nostalgically about depressing and painful topics. She looks back on the life she created for herself and her children with pride, and her tone indicates that she is confident she has left all of that pain behind. She recounts her story as a relic of "those days," suggesting that since then, Jamaica has changed (106). Though this indicates her hopefulness that post-independence Jamaica has become a more tolerant and less polarised society, her belief in the need for her extended lesson on physically enforcing the "right and proper way" belies this optimism.

The narratives of Helen and Ciselyn are important not only to their own lives, but also in their children's lives. As Steedman asserts, "At all levels, class-consciousness must be learned in some way, and we need a model of such a process to explain the social and psychological development of working-class children (indeed of all children)" (1987:15). One of the central questions of Steedman's book *Landscape for a Good Woman: A story of Two Lives* (1987:7) is:

what becomes of the notion of class-consciousness when it is seen as a structure of feeling that can be learned in childhood, with one of its components a proper envy, the desire of people for the things of the earth? Class and gender, and their articulations, are the bits and pieces from which psychological selfhood is made.

The stories of Helen and Ciselyn help to piece together the ways women oppressed on the basis of their colour, gender and class attempt to teach their children how to be “good women” and what they hope these lessons will achieve. When Helen’s daughter Marion asks “how many versions of herself exist in the world?” (190), she indicates the broad relevance of such narratives. For women like Helen and Ciselyn, the measure of physical comfort garnered by conforming to the rules of respectability does not outweigh the psychological trauma they spend their lives trying to suppress.

These narratives also challenge the ideological framing of the nations they depict. Both Channer and Wicomb choose fiction as the lens through which they reflect on the past. Through this medium, their texts simultaneously revise and trouble the venerated images of optimism that the post-apartheid/colonial dispensations have used to paint over the past. They return to moments of unease in the past to pick at the scabs, revealing the festering wounds underneath. The kinds of subjectivities that official proclamations like multiracial mottoes and government-sanctioned parades of forgiveness like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are designed to create cannot reside alongside the visibly wounded subjects that these texts portray. One image must displace the other or at the very least, the two must come face-to-face in order to be truly reconciled. By drawing these incongruous moments into focus side-by-side, these texts begin this work of putting the violence of the past into conversation with the present.

Chapter Four

“No Such Thing as Return”: Coming Home in *The Same Earth* and *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town*

Most will believe, with all their heart, that there is a place there waiting for them. But this is foolish thinking. For every man exists in the world the way a body exists in water: the moment you leave, the space you occupied will close over. What is left is not even the shape of your body, but the memory of it. There is no such thing as return. We leave one place. We arrive at another. But the person who arrives is never the person who left. (Miller, 2008:150)

The propaganda of white superiority promotes all components of whiteness, including the imperial metropolises from which this ideology emanates. The colonisers and expatriates who ventured out into the colonies from these vaunted locales served as agents of the ideology idealising their homelands, despite their ironic choice to leave those “paradises” behind. Places like England, Canada and America have historically been posited as “centres of whiteness,” the nuclei from which modernity and knowledge flows to places that are positioned as “disadvantaged” and “underdeveloped” by comparison. This has endowed many colonial subjects with the impression that their marginalised homelands are inferior to the utopias of Europe and North America. Colonised peoples are taught to aim for whiteness because its approximation in appearance, norms and values are rewarded while other ways of being are punished. As such, the metropolises from which the streams of whiteness seem to flow come to serve as meccas for those aspiring to the ideal of whiteness and the benefits meted out in exchange for assimilation.

To facilitate the adoption of their values and acceptance of their supposed superiority, colonisers engaged in a systematic project of “cultural denigration” through the “conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture” in favour of their “supposedly superior racial or cultural model” (Ashcroft et al, 2003:9). Scholars such as Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Gayatri Spivak, Desiree Lewis and Anne McClintock³⁹ have written at length on

³⁹ See Albert Memmi, *The colonizer and the colonized*. (London: Routledge, 2013 - Original work published 1957); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove press, 2008 - Original work published in English 1967); Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on colonialism*. (New York: NYU Press, 2001 - Original work published 1950); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Spivak Reader: Selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. (London: Routledge,

the impact of the denigration of indigenous values and the assimilation of white, European culture on colonised peoples. The colonised themselves are often co-opted into inadvertently advancing the agenda of white superiority through their own adoption of this ideology as truth. One of the many legacies of colonialism is a literary tradition of “commonwealth” authors writing to, from and about the metropole, reflecting on the experience of being an imperial subject. In the case of England, much of this writing was generated by what has come to be known as the “Windrush generation,” comprised of Caribbean, Indian, and other British imperial subjects who arrived in the UK between 1948 and 1971 to fill labour shortages following the end of World War II. This influx of immigrants changed the social landscape of the United Kingdom, transforming it from predominantly white into a multiracial society (Hansen, 1999:95). The writing of the Windrush generation focused largely on encountering racism and disappointment abroad. More recently, many contemporary postcolonial writers in exile have also focused on the experience of migration, critiquing the relationship between the metropole and their home countries and addressing the challenges involved in return after having lived abroad. These texts address the feelings of alienation caused by migration, and the difficulty of navigating the norms of home with an outlook altered by living abroad.

As Paul White asserts, “migration is generally about dislocation and the potential alienation of the individual from both old norms and new contexts. It is about change” (1995:6). White (1995:14) goes on to point out that,

amongst all the literature of migration the highest proportion deals in some way with ideas of return, whether actualized or remaining imaginary. To return may be to go back but it may equally be to start again: to seek but also to lose. Return has both a temporal and a spatial dimension. For the individual returning to their ‘own’ past and place it is rarely fully satisfying: circumstances change, borders in all senses are altered, and identities change too.

White’s analysis emphasises loss. In exchange for what can be gained from the encounter with the metropole, the previous self must be surrendered. As Stefansson & Markowitz point out, “in the course of protracted absence home develops, and so too do the people living away from home. Because of such transformations of place and identity, homecoming often contains

2013); Desiree Lewis, *Living on a horizon: Bessie Head and the politics of imagining*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007); Anne McClintock, *Imperial leather: Race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest*. (London: Routledge, 2013).

elements of rupture, surprise, and perhaps, disillusionment” (2004:4). These difficulties have become a trope in postcolonial fiction, as evidenced by canonical novels such as Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* and recurrence of the trope of the “been-to” and “Americanah”⁴⁰ in African fiction and film (1960).

Many of the texts that foreground these experiences of migration address the fraught anxieties surrounding the (im)possibility of return to a homeland left behind. The work of Jamaican author Kei Miller and South African author Zoe Wicomb both address the challenges of reintegrating upon return home after significant time spent abroad. Though Miller’s novel *The Same Earth* (2008) is published two decades after Wicomb’s *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987), a comparative reading of the experiences of migration and return portrayed in these two texts provides insight into some important parallels across these historically linked locations. Since both texts are set in contexts where a relationship between class and colour is interwoven into the social fabric of the nation, racial and social discrimination plays a significant role in the decisions the characters make to leave their homelands and are also proven to be the most significant issues the protagonists must contend with upon return. In both *The Same Earth* (2008) and *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987), the protagonists choose to go to England, and these depictions of the encounter with the colonial “mother country” allows for reflection on the former colony’s relationship to the metropole and the lingering impact of colonial heritage. Upon return, these characters become “been-to’s” in their home contexts, and the portrayal of their return allows for analysis of the assumptions and attitudes of the community members who receive them and of their experience as returnees. The authors’ portrayal of the alienation and dislocation they experience upon return can be read as a commentary on the challenges of migration, diasporisation and re-diasporisation in a globalised world post-colonialism/apartheid. In my exploration of the texts, I am especially interested in investigating the authors’ portrayal of the social factors that inspire the main characters’ departure, whether they are portrayed as being

⁴⁰ Chimamanda Adichie’s award winning novel *Americanah* (2014) takes as its title the common Nigerian slang term used to refer to someone who has lived in the US and focuses on the experience of a Nigerian woman who moves to the US and then struggles to reconcile her new life with the people and place she has left behind. The Nigerian slang term “been-to” is similarly used to refer to people who have been to a Western country for work or study and return with the knowledge and experience of the place they have “been to.”

able to find the freedom and social mobility they seek abroad, and how they are received by their families and communities upon return.

Zoe Wicomb's *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* is acclaimed both in South Africa and abroad for its nuanced representation of coloured identity. In Rob Gaylard's analysis he asserts that "the question of identity" is central to the text, and "intimately bound up with this are the polarities of home and exile" (1996:177). Though Wicomb has said that "subtle British racism" and "the English educational system" caused her to "feel it would be presumptuous of [her] to write and even to speak," ironically, *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* was written while Wicomb was living abroad in England (Hunter & MacKenzie, 1993:83). In the foreword to the 2008 edition of the text, David Attwell describes the main character Frieda as coming to the "gradual realisation of the impossibility of living meaningfully under apartheid's contradictions" which leads to her "self-imposed exile in the United Kingdom, and finally her ambiguous return, in which she learns that life in the country of her birth has moved on, leaving her without the authority to pass judgment" (Wicomb, 2008:7). Similarly, according to Davis & Wood, Wicomb claims to have left South Africa "because of this sense of claustrophobia that living in South Africa brought" (cited in Raiskin, 1996:226), implying that like the main character in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* Frieda, she felt compelled to flee South Africa in the hope of finding the freedom and distance she needed to express herself abroad.

As with much of her work, the stories in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* reflect Wicomb's interest in race, racialisation, and the tools used to classify and distinguish race and class in apartheid South Africa. The collection is comprised of ten interconnected stories that serve as a bildungsroman, following the main character, Frieda, from childhood to university, then charting her move to the UK and her return to South Africa ten years later. The stories are set in apartheid South Africa in the 1970s and 80s, and throughout the text, the impact of the doctrine of the state and the inculcation of racism in both the personal and private domain are made manifest. Through their attempts to guide Frieda as she navigates the treacherous social terrain of apartheid, Frieda's parents serve as conduits of racial ideology, teaching her to distance herself from blackness and her Griqua heritage and assimilate white standards of beauty and traditional

British norms. The “myriad petty tyrannies” she endures in the policing of this requirement serve as the primary cause for her departure (Mukherjee, 1987).

The preoccupation with colour and class featured in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* is one of the key similarities between Wicomb's text and Miller's *The Same Earth*. Though the Jamaica of the 1980s that Miller depicts is not under a formal, legally enforced racial hierarchy, a strictly maintained pigmentocracy similar to apartheid is upheld. Miller depicts a nation obsessed with skin colour, where dark-skinned blacks are relegated to the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy. Above them is a middle strata of light-skinned or “mixed” black people and at the very top, so-called “Jamaican whites.” As historical context, the novel references early twentieth century Jamaica, a time when black men did not retaliate when pushed to the ground by “fair-skinned” men, knowing “that such people were protected by every law” (Miller, 2008:41). Likewise, Jamaican black women engage in sexual relationships with fair-skinned men with the hope of bearing a child “who would inherit something of his father's complexion which would propel him to a greater place in the world,” given the strictures of the colorist social and economic hierarchy (42).

Much of Miller's work focuses on colorism and the intersection of colour, race and class in Jamaica. Though he was born in Jamaica, he has spent much of his adult life in the UK, and like Wicomb, he often addresses the experience of leaving home for the UK and the experience of return. He describes Jamaica's attempts to hide the prevalence of racism behind classism as a “sophisticated” attempt to obscure the truth (Macleod, 2017). In an interview (Miller & Wachtel, 2017) he says,

Jamaica is a very racist society. It is very racist, but we never use that word because our racism is so wonderfully sophisticated that we call it classism or shadeism or other things. We never get to what's at the heart of the kinds of discriminations we practice. It never appears to us as racism — racism for Jamaicans is something that we learn from history books, or from American television, and so we assume that's where those things operate.

Miller unearths this “hidden racism” and “the ways in which we always participate in racism and therefore how we continue what we are supposed to be emancipated from” through the ways in which the novel's main character, Imelda Richardson, is both interpellated and oppressed by her community (Macleod, 2017).

Yearning for “Foreign”

Miller’s text foregrounds the difficulties and disappointments of the post-independence era in the Jamaica of the 1970s. In the 70s, the nation is emerging from the first decade post-independence, and the social and economic triumphs many hoped to see have yet to come to fruition. In the eyes of some, the outlook of the nation feels hopeless, especially when compared with the distant and “developed” land of England—so much so that the two places do not seem to occupy “the same earth.” One of the novel’s themes is Jamaica’s relationship with “foreign,” through which Jamaica is cast as an insignificant, problem-riddled nation in comparison to the idealised image of England as the land of opportunity. As such, from the perspective of the inhabitants of Watersgate where the novel is set, “it was expected... that whatever came from abroad was bound to be superior” (8). The prevalence of this sentiment is substantiated in the research of scholars like Belinda Edmondson (1999) and Deborah Thomas (2004) who explore Jamaica’s preoccupation with the UK and the impact of migration on the nation.

The idealisation of other (specifically Western) nations in the view of rural Jamaicans in particular is explored in the novel through the portrayal of the main character Imelda and her parents, who have little faith in Jamaica and are eager to expose their daughter to what exists beyond the borders of the island nation. Imelda is born in 1956, six years before Jamaica attains independence from England in 1962.⁴¹ She leaves Jamaica when she is 18 years old at the request of her parents Desmond and Sarah, whose disillusionment in the unfulfilled promises of post-independence Jamaica leave them with little hope that their daughter will find happiness or success in the land of her birth. Her father laments the difference between what the generation before them left behind and the “bad job” his generation has done of preparing the nation for their children. Desmond tells his wife, “we don’t have nothing to leave the next set of young people. The country just mash up so bad...” (73). They resolve to “send her to England, where it have opportunity for young people” (72). Desmond’s sentiment echoes that of many other

⁴¹ Notably, Imelda is born eight years after the initial Windrush journey, in the period during which immigration laws (specifically the British Nationality Act of 1948) which “accelerated Caribbean migrants’ active exercise of the privileges of Britishness that the Empire had promised long before,” allowing citizens of the commonwealth to arrive in the UK as citizens (Campt, 2017:29). Though she travels as an 18 year old in 1974, three years after the 1971 Immigration Act which formerly brought a stop to the policies that allowed for free migration from the colonies to the UK for the purposes of work, Imelda inherits the view of England transmitted to her and her community from the Windrush generation, who she also encounters in the UK upon her arrival.

Jamaicans in the post-independence era who have sought professional advancement and academic opportunity abroad.

The role Imelda's father plays as an instigator of her travel abroad and to England in particular, is reinforced in the second chapter of the novel entitled "The Silly Thing Imelda Believed as a Child." This chapter provides insight into Desmond's skewed perspective of both Jamaica and the UK. When Imelda is four years old she asks her father about the destination of a plane she sees flying overhead and his simple, one-word response is "England" (18):

It was the answer he always gave, as if, from that distance, he could recognise the specific aircraft, its number and its destination. And Imelda, with the precise logic common to children, put two and two together: if people needed to take a plane to England, then England must be in the sky. She held on to this idea for most of her childhood, so convinced the by the simple obviousness of it that she never needed to share it with anyone. And although she never thought of it in exactly these words there was also the notion that if England was in the sky, then it was a kind of heaven; Jamaica, a kind of hell. As if the two places weren't even on the same earth.

Desmond presupposes the destination of every plane he sees as leaving Jamaica (never arriving), thereby conveying the idea that Jamaica is a place to escape *from* and not *to*. Repeatedly referring to England as the only possible destination of these planes simultaneously suggests the pre-eminence and popularity of England as a destination. Imelda's perceptive four-year-old mind picks up on this inference. England becomes a heavenly, utopian destination accessible only through the miracle of flight. The idea that England is heaven and Jamaica must be hell by comparison quietly germinates in her mind, reinforced by the hardship she sees around her. This is complemented by the propaganda she hears of England as she grows into adulthood. The concepts of Jamaica and England that Imelda formulates in her childhood mind are as separate, unrelated places. She does not see the ways that England's historical role has impacted Jamaica's present nor vice versa. Prefixing the chapter's title with the words "The Silly Thing" is an ironic move that highlights the gravity of concepts formulated in childhood and the ripple effect of those beliefs later in life. As the novel reveals, the ideas children hold that are thought of as "silly" can be astute social commentary and reflect keen insight into social and cultural dynamics that the child herself may not yet understand but which can nonetheless have meaningful impact on their lives well into adulthood.

Imelda's departure from Jamaica occurs shortly after a hurricane devastates the island in 1974. Desmond sees the hurricane as the perfect impetus for the departure he has planned for his daughter since birth, and also as a symbol of Jamaica's unsuitability socially, economically and environmentally. Because of Jamaica's pigmentocratic social structure, Desmond assumes that Imelda's blackness and humble, rural origins will impede her ability to achieve class mobility. Assuming that England is a diverse and cosmopolitan place, he resolves that this is where she must go. He assures her that unlike in Jamaica, where complexion and class origins often determine what kind of careers one can pursue, "in England people can be anything they want to be: lawyer, doctor, or Indian chief" (72). Desmond's suggestion that women like Imelda cannot become anything they want to be in Jamaica is reiterated in other novels and in socio-historical texts that reveal that in mid-century Jamaica, professional jobs such as bank tellers⁴² and front office staff were often reserved for light-skinned, middle-class women (Cooper, 2017). Hoping that this glass ceiling will not be a factor in England and that Imelda's colour and class origins will matter less than her intellect there, Desmond and Sarah send their only daughter away to give her a chance at a better life.

Notably, neither Desmond nor Sarah have ever been to England themselves. Presumably, their view of England is informed by a pro-British colonised school curriculum and propaganda imbibed from the British colonial system. Some of this propaganda is evident in the text through the testimonies Imelda hears from returnees who have lived in the UK as she prepares to leave. Some of the Jamaicans who have gone to England and returned tell Imelda about the deference of everyone in England, even the cows on the side of the road, to the Queen, demonstrating a fetishised allegiance and obedience to the royal family, which is interpreted as a sign of decency, propriety and respect (77). Others tell of the difficulty of knowing no-one in a foreign land, and of having to "walk untold distances" as a result (77). In the light of the idealisation of "foreign," this takes on a frightening but ennobling tone, as the Enlightenment virtues of hard work and independence are associated with the requirement to "forge your own path" and "make it on your own." On the other hand, one woman describes the experience as being surrounded by both a

⁴² In an op-ed piece published in the Jamaica Gleaner in 2017, Carolyn Cooper refers to this history of segregation in Jamaica, revealing how when current bank employees get together, they reflect on "the early days when black people started to break through the glass ceiling of upper management at the old imperial Barclays Bank" (Cooper, 2017).

literal and figurative “mist” that drove her to madness for the twenty years she lived in England, and how the mist only lifted when she returned home to Jamaica (78). This perspective is an ominous warning foreshadowing Imelda’s experience in England, but as she plans her departure she does not take it into serious consideration.

So opaque is Imelda’s concept of England that the only image she is able to conjure from the composite of stories she hears is of “a long, long road covered in mist. And on the side of the road were cows wearing tiaras who bowed down graciously whenever the Queen passed by” (78). While this image does not inspire confidence, it is tempered by the anecdotes of success found abroad. Furthermore, the lingering memory of the “silly thing” she believed as a child is reaffirmed by the context around her (75):

In those days, almost everybody was waiting for a ticket out. Great Britain had taken so much from her colonies, the colonies were now taking back. Caribbean people landed by the thousands on English shores, many without a place to stay or a plan of what they might do. They arrived with the simple conviction, that England had something to give them, something they were entitled to, and they weren’t going to leave until they got it. Imelda becomes part of this attempted postcolonial reclamation, fuelled by the anecdotes of others who have gone abroad, the conviction of her parents, and the seemingly insurmountable challenges at home. Eventually she concedes, determining that it would be “silly” to turn down this opportunity (74).

Anglophilia and Family Responsibility in the Karoo

While Imelda chooses to leave Jamaica because of the compulsion of her parents and the inhospitable environment created by a recent hurricane, in *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town* Wicomb presents an environment that is inhospitable in other ways. The main character Frieda’s family and community are shown to have adopted a preoccupation with the British iteration of whiteness in response to oppression by the predominantly Afrikaner apartheid government. This echoes the same kind of preoccupation with Britishness in another of Wicomb’s texts, *Playing in the Light* (2006), wherein the character of Marion has a similar relationship with her parents to Frieda’s. This pattern establishes Wicomb’s interest in the intergenerational transmission of racial performance and embodiment. In Frieda’s case, because of the intersectional oppression she experiences as a coloured woman, she is hemmed in by a litany of rules that dictate how she

should behave in almost every situation. Her mother and father both convey these expectations to her, and her extended family takes on the role of enforcers in their absence. Frieda chafes against these restrictions but also internalises them. Eventually the list of rules and regulations begin to form part of her internal monologue, as evidenced in the titular story when she chastises herself for falling in love with a white man and becoming pregnant outside of wedlock, two stereotypes that plague coloured femininity and are considered to be part of the “original sin” of coloured identity (Adhikari, 2006a).

The Shentons’s preoccupation with England is initially presented as a fixation on the English language and the power it holds to distinguish between the “civilised” and the “savage.” In the Shenton household, the British are viewed as the ultimate arbiters of taste and authorities on the use of the English language, which is viewed as “belonging” to them. In the opening story, “Bowl Like Hole,” Mr. Weedon, a white Englishman who uses Frieda’s father as a translator when communicating with the workers at his gypsum mine, represents the dignity and class the Shentons associate with England. Frieda’s mother describes Mr. Weedon as “a gentleman, a true Englishman” from whom the “uncouth Boers from the dorp... could learn a few things” (12-13). He is distinguished from “any other white man enquiring about sheep or goats or servants” by his native Englishness, which elevates him above the Afrikaners Frieda’s mother deems undignified. “Mr. Weedon spoke not one word of Afrikaans. For people who were born in England the g’s and r’s of the language were impossible, barbaric” (13). As a step above the Afrikaner, Mr. Weedon and his fellow British countrymen become the standard to which the Shentons aspire.

Despite Mr. Weedon’s assumed superiority over the coloured and black workers he oversees, the text reveals his insecurities regarding his relationship with his workers. He requires Mr. Shenton’s accompaniment to translate from English to Afrikaans lest a joke he makes falls flat or one is made at his expense, worrying about “how they would laugh later at his black or smiling face” (16). This “deep fear of appearing foolish” reveals Mr. Weedon’s position of insecurity as both a minority and an outsider among his workers (16). As he inhabits his role as “native informant” and displays his allegiance to whiteness, Frieda’s father compensates for Mr. Weedon’s weaknesses by translating in his favour and protecting his ignorance about the nature of the soil when he waxes lyrically about the preponderance of rain in the veld (which is

notoriously arid). Despite this obvious ignorance, Mr. Weedon's lack of knowledge about the landscape of the Northern Cape or the Afrikaans language is not seen as a weakness to the Shentons, for the knowledge he *does* hold is far more valuable.

When Mr. Weedon pronounces the word "bowl" like "hole" and not like "howl," Frieda's parents are unsettled to discover that they have been mispronouncing the word. The shock of this discovery is made all the more troubling because of the pride and sense of superiority they extract from being the best English speakers in their community. They do not challenge Mr. Weedon or consider the possibility of variations in pronunciation because "he's English, he ought to know" (19). While Mr. Weedon's insecurities can be compensated for externally (via translators), Mrs. Shenton accounts for hers personally: "She would have to check the pronunciation of every word she had taken for granted" (19). Her confidence in her ability to speak English well, along with her husband's (who is one of the best English speakers in the area) is called into question by this mispronunciation of such a frequently used word. The destabilising effect of this realisation and Mrs. Shenton's compensatory vow to check "every word" is significant. One word spoken by Mr. Weedon puts every word she speaks into question, revealing her command of the English language (an intrinsic requirement for tameness) to be tenuous and insecure. Monitoring the pronunciation of every word previously taken for granted requires an all-consuming vigilance but she commits to it nonetheless because of how important speaking English perfectly is to her. Observing her mother's commitment to speaking flawless British English Frieda remarks: "I knew that unlike the rest of us it would take her no time at all to say bowl like hole, smoothly, without stuttering" (19). Frieda overhears this conversation between her parents as she crouches beneath the kitchen table as a child. In the same breath that Mr. Weedon is revered for his English knowledge, Frieda is reprimanded for "sitting under the table like a tame Griqua," a comment loaded with stereotypical associations between Griqua people and savagery (18). It reveals her mother's view of Griquas as wild and therefore in need of taming. The juxtaposition of these two comments lay bare Mrs. Shenton's investment in disassociating herself from her Griqua heritage in favour of appropriation of the white British norms that facilitate social mobility in the context of apartheid.

Her mother's commitment to speaking English well is also conveyed to Frieda via the aforementioned instructions not to speak to the Dirkse children who live nearby in Afrikaans, even though it is their first language. Mrs. Shenton believes the Dirkse children "ought to understand English and it won't hurt them to try" (14). As with Mr. Weedon's presumed preeminent knowledge of English pronunciation, Mrs. Shenton uses the word "ought," implying a *requirement* to speak English, supported by a system that reinforces and rewards the fulfilment of this obligation. Frieda's mother conscripts her into disciplining the Dirkse children, forcing them to learn English as she and her husband have, despite having "to put up with things [they] don't understand" (14).

The valorisation of England and the English language for a portion of the coloured population in South Africa is rooted in the historical relationship between English and Afrikaans throughout colonialism and apartheid. According to Gerald Stell, the English-Afrikaans divide within the coloured population can be traced back to "the British takeover in 1806" which led to the "introduction of English, which over time turned out to act as an agent of social differentiation, around which not only ideological but also ethnic tensions came to crystallize" because "English symbolized social advancement for all sections of Cape Dutch speaking society regardless of ethnicity" (Stell, 2010:426). This was especially so because English speaking schools were among the few avenues through which people of colour could seek an education, making it such that "the Coloured intelligentsia soon displayed a tendency to identify with the ideals of the British Empire and the English language" (Stell, 2010:427). Therefore, the ability to speak English allowed for the distinction between different "kinds" of coloureds as a marker of class and status.

V. A. February (1981:91) points to the tensions within the coloured community through references made to the prevailing attitude towards Afrikaans expressed in the journal of the Teachers League of South Africa:

The general attitude was crystal clear even in the fifties. Afrikaans was a language of contempt and of oppression... One language, Afrikaans, was associated with apartheid and Afrikanerdom, parochialism and oppression, and ... one language, English, was regarded as the gateway to the wider, unprejudiced world.

The complication of the British-Afrikaner rivalry adds an additional dimension to Wicomb's portrayal of the Shenton family's relationship to Englishness. Frieda's father's cousin, Jan Klinkies, who is noted for his apparent intellectual disability and disinterest in the world around him, nonetheless responds with a slurred "Whatcomfortsaboerispoisontome" when offered a cup of coffee, which Frieda's father calls "Boeretrees" (farmer's comfort) (27). Similarly, Frieda's father refuses to drink rooibos tea because the most popular brand features "an ox wagon scaling the Drakensburg" accompanied by people dressed like Voortrekkers on the packaging (27). This reference to what is known as "the Great Trek" offends him, as for many, the march into the South African interior by the groups of Dutch settlers who have come to be known as the "Voortrekkers" represents violence against the indigenous peoples of South Africa and the expropriation of land. In this way, the vilification of all things associated with Afrikaners, including Afrikaans, becomes a political stance and an act of rebellion.

The Shentons consider British colonialism more humane than the Afrikaner variety and see the British as "gentlemen" while the Afrikaners are "uncouth," and therefore pledge their allegiance to the British.⁴³ The idealisation of Britishness is evidenced by the British iconography in the Shenton's home. Displayed in the family's sitting room is "the glazed face of Jesus, the Queen Mother in her youth, Oupa Shenton, and the picture of an English thatched cottage in the Karoo headed with the flourished scroll of Home Sweet Home" (109). The picture of an English cottage in the discordant setting of the Karoo exemplifies British colonialism: the incongruence of the architecture of England with its surroundings is less important than the replication of the metropole in the colony. The emblazoned "Home Sweet Home" leaves it open to interpretation whether the "sweet home" is the Karoo or the English cottage. Based on Frieda's description of her family's routine and requirements of her in Namaqualand, such as taking afternoon tea despite the sweltering heat and demanding that she speak English even to her Afrikaans-speaking playmates, the mimicry of Britishness is intrinsic to what it means to be "home." The other

⁴³ In *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Cape Town*, Vivian Bickford-Smith provides an extensive explication of the history of the Afrikaner-British rivalry in the Cape and the origins of the stereotypes of Afrikaners and idealisation of the English born out of economic and political conflict during the era of British colonialism (2003). As Bickford-Smith notes, in English media, "Afrikaners or 'the Dutch' were often stereotyped in English discourse as 'deliberate and slow' or 'inert', the English (or Anglo-Saxons) as bringing progress" (2003:62). Nonetheless, despite this rivalry between the two 'races,' both groups consolidated under the unifying identity of whiteness to counter the power of the black majority. Notably, Bickford-Smith also refers to the similarities of racial politics between inner-city Cape Town, New Orleans and Kingston, Jamaica in the 1880s (2003:90).

images displayed alongside the cottage further exemplify an idealisation of whiteness. The physical features of the “glazed face of Jesus” have become so standardised as to not require detailed description - it is assumed that the image will feature a white man with flowing brown hair and a beard. Alongside him, like another benevolent deity, the Queen Mother watches over all the family does in their sitting room. Paired with the image of a white Jesus, the two become the figurative patron saints of whiteness reigning over the Shelton household, serving as both the watchmen and enforcers of their interconnected doctrines of Christianity and Britishness.

Furthermore, this idealisation of Britishness is evidenced when Frieda declares that she has no interest in visiting the Queen when she’s in England in a conversation with Oom Dawid, a friend of her father. He declares “Then I’ll have to go and see for myself one day and tell the Queen about those Boers and how they treat us” (102). As Frieda’s mother does in “Bowl Like Hole,” Oom Dawid invokes the Afrikaner-British rivalry in his remarks, in which the Queen becomes the fair-minded mother protecting her poorly treated children from the Afrikaners. His fetishisation of the Queen is further evidenced by the “faded magazine picture of the Coronation stuck above his sideboard” (102). Oom Dawid’s allegiance to the British crown is something he imposes on Frieda as well. He insists that “You have to put your heart with someone. Now you don’t want to know about Vorster, and you don’t care about the Queen, and our Griqua chief isn’t grand enough for you. It’s leaders we need. You young people with the learning must come and lead us” (103). In this he joins a chorus of members of her community who pressure Frieda to both represent and lead them in the model of British colonialism.

In response to this demand that she come back and lead her people with the knowledge she has gained abroad, “the old guilt rises and wrings the moisture from [her] tongue” (103). She longs to escape the burden of her family and community and their continuous messages of duty and obligation; “Their words, all their words, buzz like a drove of persistent gnats about my ears” (110). The litany of rules that she must obey to meet the standard that her family has set make it seemingly impossible for her to assert her own identity in this environment and to relate to them. She wonders, “Why do I find it so hard to speak to those who claim me as their own?” (101). Navigating the social landscape of her community requires towing the thin line of approximating whiteness, while maintaining allegiance to her people and to coloured identity. This challenge is

significant because the two identities are posited as contradictory and at times even oppositional. This quandary causes Frieda great distress, and results in feelings of alienation from her community.

This crisis comes to a head when Frieda's father enrolls her in an English school. As has been mentioned earlier, often English schools were the only institutions to offer access to high quality education to coloured learners. So in spite of her anxieties about leaving home, Frieda's father sends her to St. Mary's, an all-white boarding school, because of his desire that she have "the very best education" reserved by the apartheid government for white children (41). It is expected that at St. Mary's she will be exposed to whiteness and therefore acquire mores and values that will give her access to greater opportunity in adulthood. Like Imelda's parents who send her to the UK, Frieda's parents hope that by giving their daughter access to the trappings of whiteness, some of the privileges associated therewith will rub off on her. Frieda's father is willing to make the financial sacrifice to send her to St Mary's because he sees it as an opportunity for Frieda to escape the "ignorance, laziness and tobacco [that] have been the downfall of [their] people" (42). He describes the school's willingness to admit coloured children as a "generous offer" and chastens Frieda when she asks how they will afford it, telling her "you can't go to a white school if you're so stupid" (41). In so doing, he affirms not only the apartheid principle that the facilities reserved for whites are superior to those available to coloureds, but also the racist ideology at its root, by suggesting that the white students are not smarter because they go to better schools, but that they go to better schools *because* they are smarter. This reinscribes the concept that coloureds are less deserving of the resources available to whites, and that Frieda will have to work to earn her place in the school and to prove herself to be as smart as her white peers despite her skin colour.

When Frieda cries about leaving her family and community behind to go to this foreign environment, her father urges her, "You must, Friedatjie, you must. There is no high school for us here and you don't want to be a servant. How would you like to peg out the madam's washing and hear the train you once refused to go on rumble by?" (34). In this statement he makes clear to Frieda, just as Imelda's parents do by sending her to England, that the key to achieving success and avoiding a future of servitude is to be found in white institutions. The spectre of

domestic servanthood hangs over Frieda's head throughout the text, and she is often threatened by the thought of either becoming or being mistaken for a maid. When she thinks of doing a madam's washing Frieda conjures the "terrifying image of washing a madam's menstrual rags," and is immediately sobered by the prospect of the indignity of being subjected to the tasks white women will not do for themselves (34). Her fear turns into gratefulness at being spared a lifetime of servitude and she thinks, "I am grateful to be going hundreds of miles away from home; there is so much to be grateful for. One day I will drive a white car" (34). The white school becomes the source through which she will acquire a "white" car. The vehicle, which is a key to both mobility and a "modern" life of freedom, is juxtaposed against the "liquid red" of the menstrual blood that awaits her if she does not go to St. Mary's (34). She associates her encounter with and approximation of whiteness with material wealth and social advancement; her experience at St. Mary's will become the mechanism through which she will be transformed from the role of a train passenger relegated to the second-class platform (which she describes as the "inaccurate platform") into the owner of a vehicle, a distinction reserved only for successful whites like Mr. Weedon (35).

The scene of Frieda's departure for St Mary's on the train platform is punctuated by the presence of a group of coloured boys who are also on the platform. The boys' ideology strongly contrasts with the Shentons, as they have no interest in appeasing white authorities. One of them mocks the white policeman on the platform while they play loud American music to display their disregard for those around them. Confronted by these boys, Frieda feels awkward and "inexplicably ashamed," hoping that her father will not "speak loudly to [her] in English" in their presence (35). Speaking English will expose them to be the "kind of coloureds" who choose to speak English and not Afrikaans, revealing them to be socially aspirational in a way that can be interpreted as "sturvy,"⁴⁴ disloyal and pro-white. Frieda feels condemned and mocked by these boys, one of whom has an "exuberant bush of fuzzy hair" that contrasts with her own carefully coiffed, straightened hair (36). The road to success that the Shentons have chosen is admired by some who see them as "keeping up with the Boers" but despised by others like the boys on the platform who see them as disloyal sell-outs (37). Frieda is anxious and uncomfortable with what her family's ideological stance says about them and their relationship to coloured identity but

⁴⁴ "Sturvy" is an Afrikaans slang word meaning "pretentious" or "stuck up."

feels conflicted because of the financial benefits of conforming to white standards of beauty and attending white institutions. Her presence on the train platform, a liminal space between coming and going, exemplifies this “middle of the road” stance. As she wrestles with these feelings, she observes a threatening reminder: “a black girl staggers onto the white platform with a suitcase in each hand. Her madam ambles amiably alongside her to keep up with the faltering gait” (44). This image of a young woman bearing the burden of her blackness while a white woman glides weightlessly beside her throws the reality of South Africa’s pigmentocracy into stark relief. Though Frieda is conflicted about the choice to leave her family behind to go to a place where she is so profoundly alienated that she feels unseen and spends “the dinner breaks hiding in the lavatories,” it is made clear to her that the alternative is a far worse fate (43).

Because Frieda is a woman, like Suzette in *What Will People Say?* (2015) and Helen in *Playing in the Light* (2006), she must contend not only with the stereotypes applied not only to coloured identity, but also to coloured *femininity* in particular. This is exemplified by the first sentence of the story “Home Sweet Home,” which is a command: “A lady must never be seen without her handbag” (91). This foregrounds the list of rules and obligations Frieda must fulfil to meet the standards set for her by her father and her community. She must grow up to be a “lady” to prove to an audience (presumably made up of racist white onlookers and judgmental black and coloured people) that she was “brought up decent” (92). In addition to the pressure to ascribe to standards of whiteness in terms of her behaviour and language, Frieda’s mother also makes it clear to her that she falls short of the physical standards of whiteness (172).

‘If only,’ she lamented, ‘if only my eyes were wider I would be quite nice, really nice,’ and with a snigger, ‘a princess.’

Then she turned on me. ‘Poor child. What can a girl do without looks? Who’ll marry you? We’ll have to put a peg on your nose.’

And the pearled half-moon of her brown fingertip flashed as she stroked appreciatively the curious high bridge of her own nose.

These painful memories help explain the tense relationship Frieda has with her mother, as well as her issues with her own appearance. Her low self-confidence and discomfort in her own body is as much connected to her weight, which she identifies as being a result of her father’s overfeeding and her use of food as a coping mechanism, as it is to her mother’s insistence on her unattractiveness relative to white standards of beauty. In her mother’s opinion, Frieda’s hair is too frizzy and her nose is too broad for her to look like a “princess,” the ideal of which is

modelled after the white, European standard. Though there is little she can do about her nose and hair besides straightening it, Frieda's childhood is defined by the tasks she performs to discipline and mould herself into the shape of the white British culture she has been taught to revere. All aspects of her life require discipline and policing to adhere to this standard, from her way of speaking and acting to the way her hair is styled. The preparations for straightening her hair to ascribe to Western standards of beauty are extensive (36):

The wet hair wrapped over large rollers to separate the strands, dried, then swirled around [her] head, secured overnight with a nylon stocking, dressed with Vaseline to keep the strands smooth and straight, and then pulled back tightly to stem any remaining tendency to curl.

As with the curl of her hair, the stakes are high for her academic achievement as well: adults in her community are relying on her to "show [white people] what we can do" (37). She sees her future in South Africa as dim, juxtaposed against the threat of ending up "in a madam's kitchen," (the fate reserved for young women who do not distinguish themselves academically) is the fate of living the rest of her life restricted by the laws of apartheid and her community's requirements (38).

Ultimately, when Frieda resolves to leave South Africa she does so with a sense of defiance inspired by her refusal to stay in a country and community that does not allow her to define her own rules for herself and her future. She no longer feels that she belongs "without question to this country, this world" and longs to escape (101). Tempering this desire however is the memory of the emigration of her Great Uncle Hermanus as a child. When the family accompanies him to the docks to see him off, Uncle Hermanus is one of the only coloured faces among the crowd on the poop deck of the ship. As he prepares to leave all he knows behind, he reassures the family: "Man, there's no problem; we're mos all Juropeens when we get to Canada," revealing his anxiety about how he will be racially classified on arrival and his hope that his appearance will allow for reclassification as white (92). Immediately after attempting to reassure himself and his family he vomits, belying the casual confidence he attempts to exude. As the ship pulls away the passengers throw streamers to the crowd below as a last connection to their loved ones on land. As she prepares to leave for the UK, Frieda's memory of the streamers takes on an increased symbolism. Recalling the scene, Frieda notes "the coloured fragility of the ties that would snap as the boat wriggled away" (93). The multiple meanings of the word

“coloured” in the South African context are made manifest in this description. In one sense, the streamers Uncle Hermanus holds are a brightly coloured item that ties him to the shore, but in the context of the comment he made earlier expressing his concern about racial classification, the term “coloured fragility” is also a reminder of the insecurity and liminality of coloured identity. Not even in South Africa are the parameters of colouredness clearly defined, but in Canada the term will be meaningless. His link to any measure of security in his coloured identity “snaps” as he pulls away from the shore.

In a letter sent home after his emigration to Canada Uncle Hermanus says: “I haven’t seen the ground for so many weeks now that I can’t believe it’s the same earth I’m walking on. Here is hard snow as far as the eyes can see. This really is the land for the white man” (91). The occurrence of the phrase “the same earth” in Wicomb’s text is striking. The characters in Miller’s text share the feelings of alienation, othering, and foreignness that Uncle Hermanus refers to abroad. The scene signals Frieda’s early association with transcontinental travel as an unmooring from her family, community and coloured identity. Despite the ambivalence with which Uncle Hermanus regards this separation, Frieda comes to see it as a good thing, because it will give her the freedom she needs from a home to which she is no longer certain she belongs.

Frieda’s internal battle is emblematised by a symbolic incident that occurs shortly before she leaves her family behind in Namaqualand (111):

Before me, between two trickles of water, a mule brays. It struggles in what must be a stretch of quicksand. Transformed by fear its ears alert into quivering conductors of energy. With a lashing movement of the ears, the bray stretches into an eerie whistle. It balances on its hind legs like an ill-trained circus animal, the front raised, the belly flashing white as it staggers in a grotesque dance. When the hind legs plummet deep into the sand, the front drops in search of equilibrium. Then, holding its head high, the animal keeps quite still as it sinks.

Frieda’s aunt has described her as “stubborn as a mule” because she “always pulls the other way,” and as she watches the animal sink she sees herself in the mule’s struggle against the pull of the quicksand (94). As a hybrid animal (a cross between a horse and a donkey), the term “mulatto” (which is replaced with “coloured” in South African racial terminology) originates from this concept of the mule as a “mixed breed”). Though mules are typically viewed as humble beasts of burden, this one takes on a noble air in its struggle, transformed into a steed with its

head held high as it sinks. Its ability to audibly rebel is suppressed from a bray to a whistle, which exemplifies Frieda's own fears about losing her voice amidst her struggle for self-actualisation, causing her to wonder "why do I find it so hard to speak to those who claim me as their own?" (101). The fight to survive against the force of the quicksand renders the animal grotesque, suggesting that Frieda's struggle against the pressures to conform and the weight of her family's expectations and apartheid regulation is making her into someone she does not want to be. Frieda notes that of all the things her father has warned her to be careful of in the veld, quicksand is not one of them (111), suggesting that though he is aware of all the things that can come against his daughter, he does not see the ways in which his own ideology may be one of them. To avoid the fate of the mule submerged in quicksand, Frieda resolves, "I will not come back. I will never live in this country again" (98). In her view, by comparison England becomes "a landscape anyone could love" (99).

Traumas of Diaspora

Notably, both Wicomb and Miller spend a minimal proportion of the overall text discussing the main character's time in England, even though their plotlines orbit around this experience. This raises questions about the traumas of diaspora and in the case of *The Same Earth*, about the complexity of re-diasporisation. This also marks their texts distinctively as explorations of *home* and not of exile. In *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, Frieda's experience in England is almost completely ignored (1987). As Rob Gaylard points out, "the almost complete absence of any attempt to represent Frieda's experience of exile" is "remarkable," making Frieda's time in England "the fulcrum –the absent, undramatized centre" of the text (1996:178). Because none of Wicomb's short stories are set in England, the reader is only given glimpses of Frieda's experience in England through her dreams of trying to communicate with her British neighbour but not being heard, or forlorn memories of the cold, rainy weather. When she returns to South Africa, she recalls being "tired of being stared at in England" (119) and is hesitant to describe it from her perspective, which she calls "the view of a Martian" (130). This suggests that her experience in England was defined by the feeling of alienation. She concludes that despite her misgivings about home, during her time abroad she was "in the wrong bloody hemisphere" and "could no longer avoid a visit," which is what leads to her long-awaited return (121).

Miller's text explores the experience of living in England from Imelda's perspective more extensively than Wicomb's but nonetheless, the treatment is relatively shallow. When Imelda returns to Jamaica she describes her return as (178):

a waking up from the dream that had been England. For if you asked Imelda, years later, what it was like living there, she might have told you *wonderful; it meant so much; it made me who I am*. But she would have said this only because it is what you might want or expect to hear. If you probed a little deeper you would not have come up with much. What did she remember about her classes, her fellow students, her lecturers? What did she remember about the rituals of each day? What had it all meant? Her declaration was just a way of guaranteeing that she would not return to this dream – to this life that had passed through her like an amnesia.

Imelda is conditioned to give the expected response about her time in England, careful not to disappoint those who will expect her experience to have been a positive one and is hesitant to acknowledge how meaningless it was. Longing for home and finding all of her encounters to be less “real” than the ones she had at home, her experience of living in England takes on a dream-like quality (like the woman who warned her before departure that her time in England had been like a “fog”). By representing the time spent abroad as less worthy of depiction than the experiences of home both authors make an important point. While many texts choose to centre the experience of “foreign” as more noteworthy than home, they do the opposite, reaffirming the importance of coming to terms with “home” on the character's personal development. Instead of the journey abroad forming the theoretical centre of the novel, the return to the lands of their birth becomes the more important leg of the journey of self-discovery.

In the relatively short reference to Imelda's time in England, Miller provides an interesting critique of the immigrant experience. When Imelda arrives in England, due to miscommunication between her mother and the cousin who was meant to meet her at the airport and a robbery facilitated by her vulnerability and naivety, she finds herself homeless with little money. This dire situation is compounded by her feelings of loneliness and alienation in a strange environment. The text describes the alienation experienced by immigrants in a foreign land as crippling and silencing (85):

Inside almost every immigrant there are two impulses - the impulse to shout, and the impulse to be silent. The second is by far the stronger impulse, for at some point almost every day, the immigrant is afraid of speaking. She is afraid that the sound of her voice will be a loud banner confirming to everyone else her deep fear that she does not belong. Ironically, the impulse to shout comes from the same reason, for the immigrant will want

to hear in her voice proof that she belongs somewhere else, the melodious evidence of a nation that accepts her.

After an initial outburst of rage, Imelda is completely silent for her first two days in England.

When she works up the courage to venture out of the airport, she wanders the streets of London oblivious and numb, unimpressed by Buckingham Palace and Piccadilly Circus. Misreading the many “to let” signs as “toilet, she thinks to herself, “I know it all along. This country full of shit” (86). She is disenchanted by England, and “even as she walked around and saw London, only the smallest part of her mind was engaged with what she was seeing. It was as if she decided to cocoon the rest of it - put it safely in storage. London and then all of England passed through her like an amnesia” (86). The novel refers to her experience of England twice as an “amnesia” (a condition which can be brought on by psychological trauma), thereby reinforcing the traumatic and unsettling nature of being physically relocated and emotionally dislocated, thereby upending Imelda’s concept of England as the heaven to Jamaica’s hell.

The one way in which England meets Imelda’s expectation is through her education, as Imelda is easily able to find work and to enrol in University. However, the unanticipated problem she encounters is not that she is viewed negatively, but that she is not seen at all. The people she meets look through or beyond her, and she experiences loneliness and social isolation as a result. Her relationship with another Jamaican in England named Purletta shows her what this sort of invisibility allows for –the elision of the strict link between colour and class she is used to back home in Jamaica. In England all black Jamaican immigrants are seen as “simply coloured,” so Purletta is able to reclassify as working class despite the fact that she is “fair-skinned, had light grey eyes, and worse, she spoke the kind of upper-St. Andrew English culled from the BBC news which radios in middle- and upper-class Jamaican houses were always tuned to” (89). In Jamaica, these qualities indisputably place Purletta within the upper classes. But in England, the new set of rules governing racial classification render these attributes open to interpretation. Some of Purletta’s fellow light-skinned Jamaicans attempt to pass for white because of their light complexions and appropriation of middle-class British mores, but “Purletta did the opposite,” choosing instead to appropriate behaviour associated with working-class black Jamaican culture (90).

Like Imelda's childhood association between England and heaven, Purletta's decision to eschew her upper middle-class background also originates in a "silly thing" she believed as a child (102). As with Imelda's "silly thing," there is a significance to this anecdote that is belied by its title. Purletta is raised in an exclusive wealthy neighbourhood in Kingston and her mother is described as an "an uptown Jamaican socialite" who looks down on their maid Cynthia, describing Cynthia's Jamaican patois as "Broken English" (102). Rather than deprecate the maid as her mother does, Purletta admires Cynthia and the way she speaks, learning to love the expressiveness of patois and its many proverbs. "As far as Purletta was concerned, Cynthia's English was more complete and whole than anything else in the house" (103). She yearns to speak "Broken English" like Cynthia but knows "instinctively to keep this from her mother" who will presumably be horrified at the thought (103). Purletta's mother has attempted to socialise her to revere Englishness and uphold the sanctity of the language, but Cynthia presents an alternative she finds more appealing, perhaps because it is taboo. To please her mother and meet the social expectations set for her, Purletta feels forced to hide this predilection while living in Jamaica because it is deemed unbecoming of a woman of her colour and class.

While Purletta's fetishisation of working class Jamaican culture may be tainted by exoticisation, it can also be interpreted as her way of pushing back against the restraints of Jamaica's oppressive class hierarchy. Liberated by the distance from her mother's expectations, Purletta begins to speak Jamaican patois openly in England, wear her hair in braided hairstyles, smoke marijuana, and give in to "every possible stereotype, whether negative or positive" of Jamaicans (90). Purletta's behaviour distresses her white working class British neighbours, who are invested in British standards of appropriateness and respectability and are therefore offended by immigrants like Purletta with their loud music and bold, unapologetic blackness. However, Purletta does not feel compelled to submit to her white neighbours' demands that she conform. Outside of the context of Jamaica and freed by her lack of connection to whiteness or Britishness, she is endowed with a boldness that she does not have when in Jamaica, because the people who criticise her are not "her people" and she owes them nothing. Neither ideological state apparatuses like her neighbour nor repressive state apparatuses like the police (who her neighbour calls to force her to "obey") are able to convince her to comply with their standards.

Purletta's conversion into an approximation of what she considers to be a more authentic Jamaican is most clearly marked by the physical conversion she undergoes. Her hair plays a vital role in her self-reframing, because her refusal to straighten it and choice to instead wear it in cornrowed and braided hairstyles becomes a political statement indicating her refusal to assimilate to white, Western standards of beauty. The work of Paulette Caldwell, a legal professional and scholar in the field of critical race studies, foregrounds the politics of hair, especially in her analysis of the way the American criminal justice system overlooks the intersection between racial and gender-based discrimination in the experiences of black women (1991). Using examples of discrimination against black women and their hairstyle choices in the American legal system, Caldwell counters the belief that hair is a trivial aspect of one's identity by highlighting the ways it is intentionally policed by corporations and social institutions. According to Caldwell, for black women, "Hairstyle choices are an important mode of self-expression and "reflect the search for a survival mechanism" in the context of intersectional discrimination (1991:383). For some black women, wearing their hair in natural styles is an act of resistance, protest and self-affirmation by resisting the pressure to capitulate to the status quo. For others, "Hair becomes a proxy for legitimacy and determines the extent to which individual blacks can "crossover" from the private world of segregation and colonisation (and historically, in the case of black women, service in another's home) into the mainstream" (Caldwell, 1991:383). Though Caldwell writes in the American context, the experience of intersectional gender and race-based discrimination shared by black women throughout the African diaspora makes this assertion relevant to the experiences of Purletta, Imelda and Frieda as well.

As Caldwell points out, black women experience societal pressure to discipline their natural hair textures into "straightness" in order to gain acceptance into mainstream society. The choice to do otherwise is an example of the ways the personal is made political (Caldwell, 1991:384):

Because the appearance of hair and some of its characteristics are capable of change, the choice by blacks either to make no change or to do so in ways that do not reflect the characteristics and appearance of the hair of whites, represents an assertion of the self that is in direct conflict with the assumptions that underlie the existing social order. Such self-assertions by blacks create fear and revulsion in blacks and whites alike.

Like Purletta, both Frieda and Imelda find the courage to rebel against the compulsion to wear their hair in styles sanctioned by their community once they are away from home.

Imelda arrives in England with her hair in large braids which betray both her youth and the fact that she is a “country girl” since she does not have the chemically straightened hair of a modern, urbane black woman. Along with the other advice Purletta relays to her as an immigrant with more experience of life in England is the admonishment “you have to do something ‘bout that head of hair. It don’t look good” (93). Purletta offers to braid Imelda’s hair in a style similar to her own, but Imelda opts instead to cut it all off. Purletta warns her that she “will look like a man” to which Imelda responds “maybe” (94). Imelda’s lack of concern about the fact that her closely cropped hair may be interpreted as gender transgression signals her increased sense of freedom and willingness to take risks while in England. The distance from her family and community is perhaps emboldening; because they cannot see what she does she is free to do things they may not approve of. For women, hair is also a key aspect of the way both sexuality and beauty are measured, and Imelda’s lack of concern displays her disinterest in being considered beautiful by European standards. The narrator notes that “her short hair made her face beautiful” (101), suggesting that her counter-cultural choice increases her beauty rather than diminishing it.

When Imelda returns to Jamaica, though her new hairstyle is well received by some, it enrages the pastor of the local church who views it as intentionally provocative and indicative of her rebellious nature. As the self-declared leader of the community, Pastor Braithwaite interprets Imelda’s non-conformity to both racial and gender norms as a challenge to his authority. As Caldwell points out, “Blacks who challenge the status quo, especially its dominant cultural manifestations, are identified as major threats to central national values” (1991:392). Pastor Braithwaite’s rejection of Imelda’s close-cropped afro also demonstrates “the assumption that the public equates progress for black women with the imitation of white women. Because being black is an occasion for oppression, avoiding blackness and its attached cultural associations becomes the essential mechanism of liberation” (Caldwell, 1991:391). Pastor Braithwaite’s rejection of Imelda is the first in a long line of disavowals she experiences as a result of her importation of “foreign” ways that challenge the Jamaican status quo.

Wicomb highlights the similar measure of importance placed on hair in the South African context through Frieda’s concerns about her hair and the way it will either behave or be

perceived and the similar opposition she encounters to the way she styles her hair after returning to South Africa from abroad. Frieda's childhood memories are haunted by her recollection of "the terrible torment of the comb as [her mother] hacked with explorer's determination a path through the tangled undergrowth, set on the discovery of silken tresses" (173). She continues this extended metaphor of her mother as the colonial explorer and she, the "native," pointing out that "For years we have shunted between understanding and failure, and I the Caliban will always be at fault" (179). By casting herself as Caliban and her mother as Prospero, Frieda indicates the role her mother plays as both an agent of colonial power and whiteness and as a "civilising" force on her. The popular postcolonial interpretation of the Prospero-Caliban analogy is especially useful here because at its root is a question of ownership – does Frieda own the right to her own body and hair or does her mother? As a child it is clear that Hannah sees herself as the ruler of the domain of Frieda's body, bending it to her will and forcing it to conform to her desire and standard. Cesaire's rewriting foregrounds the relationship to language between Prospero and Caliban, which is also implicated in Wicomb's representation (1992). Hannah's reference to Frieda's hair as a "bush" connotes savagery and sets the tone for her relationship with her mother: she is cast as the savage offspring, and her mother the civilised, refined Imperial subject. Frieda's memories of her mother are marked by Hannah's obsession with appearing white and her recollection of the monthly torture required to "tame" her hair is retold using language that mimics the language used by those observing Africa through an imperial lens. She compares herself to her mother, whose "sleek black waves dried admirably, falling into place" (172). As a teenager, Frieda complies, enduring painstaking rituals to straighten her naturally curly hair. In the first six stories of the collection which all take place while Frieda is still in South Africa, she dutifully conforms to the standards set for her as an aspirational coloured woman and exhibits this obedience through her hair.

Since Frieda's hair has played such an important role in her self-perception and identity throughout her childhood and adolescence, as she contemplates her move to England her hair is one of her primary concerns (101):

If my hair should drop out in fistfuls, tired of being tugged and stretched and taped, I would not be surprised. Do my fingers run through the synthetic silk with less resistance than usual? What will I do in the damp English weather? I who have risked the bulge of a bathing suit and paddled in the tepid Indian Ocean, aching to melt in the water while my

hair had to be kept dry. What will I do when it matts and shrinks in the English fog?
Perhaps so far away where the world is reversed an unexpected shower will reveal a
brand new bush of hair, a topiary work shaped as a one-eared dog.

Frieda hopes that the new climate, both environmental and social, of England, will allow her hair to take on new shape and meaning. She imagines England to be a “reversed” world where curly hair can be beautiful– her “bush” of hair will no longer be a source of shame but instead a work of art.

Like Purletta, Frieda takes advantage of the distance from her mother’s oppressive imposition of Western standards of beauty she finds in England to wear her hair naturally. However, both women take different approaches to their return. Purletta’s mother insists that she “come back [to Jamaica] a cultivated English woman” (90), so when she accompanies Imelda on her return journey to Jamaica for Imelda’s mother’s funeral, she reverts into the version of herself that her mother expects (185):

She was a different Purletta altogether. Imelda had expected black sequins and loud bawling, for although Purletta didn’t know Sarah Richardson from Adam, it was just the way with some Jamaican women to fall down the aisle, hold on to a coffin and shout, “Mi want me modder! Mi want mi modder! Whether they knew the deceased or not. Imelda had expected Purletta to be like this, but Purletta arrived in a smart, navy-blue linen dress, her hair pulled back in a severe bun. She walked slowly, and Imelda thought she had never seen this side of her friend - almost aristocratic.

Purletta explains that her decision to adapt to her mother’s requirements is made out of fear: “Yu don’t expect mi to go on with mi hooligan ways in front of mi poor modder, eh?..You’d have to make space in that grave to fling her in too. Old people’s heart give out very easy” (186).

Purletta’s mother is not just physically “old,” but also holds an old mind-set that cannot accept the kind of change she has undergone. Purletta complies to save her mother from a death brought on by the shock and shame of having a daughter who looks like a maid, and also to save herself from the ‘death’ of disownment that would likely follow this revelation.

Frieda takes the alternative route, choosing to brave her mother’s consternation. She returns to South Africa with her hair in its natural state and in the collection’s final story, a rare moment of tenderness in which Frieda and her mother reflect fondly on Frieda’s childhood ends abruptly when Hannah enquires about what Frieda does with her “boskop” (roughly translated as ‘bushhead’) in England. Attempting to maintain the light-hearted nature of the previous

conversation, Frieda responds by informing her mother that “some perfectly sensible people...pay pounds to turn their sleek hair into precisely such a bushy tangle” (186). Hannah remains unconvinced: ““But you won’t exchange your boskop for all the daisies in Namaqualand! Is that sensible too? And you say you’re happy with your hair? Always? How could you be?”” (186). The tender moment between mother and daughter is ruined –Frieda abruptly ends the conversation and suggests they leave. Hannah’s incredulity indicates that while Frieda has developed a new mind-set and perspective on natural hair abroad, her mother’s beliefs have remained the same. Frieda is either unwilling or unable to convince her mother of the beauty or importance of wearing her hair in its natural state. The choice she has made to style her hair in a way that contradicts her family’s and society’s expectations is both personal and political, but she does not defend this choice to her mother. Though she is emboldened enough to make the change while abroad, back home in Namaqualand she has neither the power nor the language to challenge her mother, one of the strongest enforcers of racial ideology in her life. Though she has grown older and has secured independence through her time abroad, in this scene, the power relations between mother and child infantilise her and render her speechless.

Purletta and Frieda are therefore proven to be more similar than it appears at first glance; both women choose to rebel against their mothers’ imposed standards of beauty, but stop short of challenging their mothers in person. For Purletta, this submission takes the form of obedience. Though she does as she pleases abroad, in her mother’s presence and within the confines of Jamaica she obeys. In Frieda’s case, she rebels through her physical appearance, but does not challenge her mother verbally. Though she might have felt empowered to defend this choice in England, in the context of South Africa, her mother’s ideology is supported by a system that enforces her beliefs, in the face of which Frieda’s power to resist is limited.

Both Purletta’s and Frieda’s mothers’ responses to their daughter’s hairstyle choices seem outsized without contextualisation on the importance of hair for women of colour. Both women see their daughter’s hairstyle choices as not just a rejection of the type of lives they have taught them to lead, but also as a rejection of them *personally*. Caldwell presents the interesting argument that “hair texture, rather than skin colour, determines racial classification,” because in instances when skin colour and other phenotypical features are close enough to whiteness as to

be indistinguishable, the subtle kink at the root of a few strands can betray one's non-white heritage (Caldwell, 1991:383). This means that by choosing to wear their hair naturally, both women choose to align themselves with blackness, an identity that their mothers have disavowed. Though this powerful assertion of self is a landmark step in their personal journeys, notably neither woman is able to take this step while at home, and both must go abroad to achieve it. In Purletta's case, the social pressures she experiences at home make it such that this bravery must be confined to the foreign space. Even though Frieda takes on the challenge of returning with her natural hair, the anxiety she feels about it and her mother's response indicates that the "new-fangled" ideas she has acquired during her time abroad remain unwelcome at home.

Despite the lack of enthusiasm with which Frieda and Imelda are received as a result of their choice to style their hair in non-traditional fashions, they are able to extract a certain measure of power from exercising this choice. Their choice to wear their hair in styles that symbolise a radical political stance and are considered to be less feminine become ways of rebelling against the subordination they experience as women of colour. In her article "Women and Their Hair: Seeking Power through Resistance and Accommodation" Rose Weitz illuminates some of the ways in which women seek power and reject subordination through resisting norms for female hair (2001). Weitz cites Foucault, who refers to the "docile bodies" required by society to obediently carry out mechanical tasks and the "disciplinary practices" used to regulate these bodies, ensuring that they internalise the ideologies necessary for their subjugation (cited in Weitz, 2001:668). This theory undergirds Weitz's description of "the body [as] a site for struggles over power" and "for resistance, as individual choices about the body become laden with political meanings (2001:668). This is especially so for women, whose socially constructed position as "feminine" and therefore weaker than and submissive to men has been used to justify subordination and control by men throughout history. Weitz foregrounds women's hair styling choices as an important site of resistance against gendered oppression and rejection of subordination "by challenging the ideologies that support that subordination" (2001:670). This makes it clear that the choice of how to style one's hair is not trite for women; it is "central to their social position" (Weitz, 2001:667).

Equally central to women's social position is their choice of sexual partner. In the same way that decisions about how to style one's hair are informed, controlled and overdetermined by societal norms and expectations, decisions about when, how and with whom a woman engages in sex are monitored and policed in the service of various social and political ends. As such, exercising one's right to have sex with whomever you choose can be another way in which women use their bodies as site of resistance against attempts to circumscribe women's agency. As both Frieda and Imelda reposition themselves upon re-entry into their previous communities, both their hair and their love-lives (two highly contested areas of a woman's body and personal life) are mobilised as symbols of the changes in their political and social identities.

In Frieda's case, her choice in sexual partner upon return to South Africa is a radical change from her partner before departure. In the collection's titular story, "You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town," Frieda aborts a child conceived in a relationship with Michael, an upper-middle-class white man she has fallen in love with. She describes her "educated voice" (which convinces the racist abortionist that she is white) as a consequence of having "drunk deeply of Michael, swallowed his voice as [she] drank from his tongue" (86). She is aware that the cultural and linguistic adoption is one-sided: "Has he swallowed mine? I do not think so" (86). In order to have the abortion, she must deny her coloured identity because the abortionist refuses to serve coloured women. Though she is desperate to abort the child, she views this denial as a betrayal of herself and her community precipitated by her relationship with Michael. She denies her colouredness like Peter denying Jesus, waiting "for all the cockerels in Cape Town to crow simultaneously" (86). In the period leading to the abortion Michael suggests England as a possible escape for the two of them and their child, but she rejects this option, plagued by a vision of "the slow shower of ashes over yards of diaphanous tulle, the moth wings tucked back with delight as their tongues whisked the froth of white lace" (82). She deems their relationship to be doomed both in South Africa and abroad. Though the experience is traumatic, when she returns ten years later she consigns "the horror of Michael" to the past, preferring not to discuss him (162).

Frieda's only other sexual partner in the text is Henry Hendrikse, a man who is posited as Michael polar opposite, both socially and politically. As a teenager Frieda's short-lived romance

with Henry is condemned by her father who describes Henry as “almost pure kaffir” (123). According to him a relationship with Henry would offend the memory of her “ancestor, an Englishman whose memory must be kept sacred, must not be defiled by associating with those beneath [her]” (123). As a teen, Frieda echoes her father’s sentiment and exhibits her inculcation of his racist beliefs in a conversation with her friend Olga in which Henry overhears Olga asking about their relationship and the letters they have exchanged, to which Frieda responds, “don’t be silly. Would I be writing to a native?” (131). Frieda realises too late that Henry is within earshot, and the comment offends him and ends their relationship.

Upon her return to South Africa, the previously obedient and apolitical Frieda attempts to present herself to her father as anti-white and revolutionary. One way in which she does so is by refusing to defer to the authority of the white doctor her father sends her to for treatment. While at the doctor’s office, she and the other people of colour are made to wait outside in the yard, and she unexpectedly sees Henry again there for the first time in over a decade. In this encounter, from her perspective he embodies a menacing blackness that makes “the roots of [her] hair tingle” (118). Clad in combat gear and covered in dust, “the great caverns of [his] nostrils” suggest to her “the flare of fire” (118). When she recognises Henry, her façade of strength and nonchalance is shaken. Under his gaze she sees herself as the image of whiteness: her “face bleached by an English autumn, the face of a startled rabbit” (119). She feels physically and psychologically whitened by her experience in England and is ashamed of this whiteness, especially when juxtaposed against Henry’s “black flesh” (118).

The book she uses to distract herself from the scene opens to a random page and her eyes alight on this sentence: “The right side was browner than a European’s would be, yet not so distinctly brown as to type him as a Hindu or Pakistani and certainly he was no Negro, for his features were quite as Caucasian as Edward’s own” (119). The line is taken from a novel entitled *Darkness Visible* by William Golding and is in reference to the character Matty, a man with a disfigured face who was burned in a fire as a child (1979). After the fire Matty’s face appears to be split in two, with one side darker than the other. In the context of Frieda’s self-consciousness about her “bleached” skin, she seems to feel a heightened connection to Matty’s “two-ness.” She feels divided by competing allegiances and a sense of double-consciousness: she imagines

herself one way but is aware that she is seen and interpreted differently by Henry (Du Bois, 2014/1903). Unlike the white gaze to which Du Bois refers in *The Souls of Black Folk*, Frieda feels observed by Henry's gaze as a black man. She feels as though Henry can see what she is reading and is "flushed with shame" at the thought, perhaps fearing also that he will see the cover of the book with its reference to "darkness" (Wicomb, 1987:119). Though she has carefully curated her appearance to appear non-conformist, relative to Henry she feels inadequate: "My hair is no longer straightened, my clothes are carefully chosen from the jumble sales and I have a vegetarian diet to thank for my not altogether unbecoming plumpness. An alternative bourgeois, European style" (124). Like the book she is reading, her appearance marks her as "an enslaved colonial" (119).

The prevailing emotions Frieda feels in Henry's presence are guilt (119) and shame (126). In "Shame and Identity: the Case of the Coloured in South Africa," Wicomb refers to black women bearing the burden of the "shame of having had our bodies stared at, but also the shame invested in those (females) who have mated with the colonizer" (1998:91). Frieda bears both forms of shame as she sits across from Henry outside the doctor's office; she feels his eyes observing her with the memory of her denunciation of him as children, along with her own knowledge of her relationship with Michael, symbolically representative of the "white coloniser." Wicomb's explication of shame is rooted in the entangled layers of "shamefulness" she describes as linked to coloured identity: the shame associated with miscegenation, shamefulness about complicity with apartheid's divide and rule tactics, and shame about the "current attempts by coloureds to establish brownness as a pure category" (1998:92). In contrast to her overwhelming shame, Henry stares at her "unashamedly" (119). He is self-righteous and confident. Unlike Frieda, who has aligned herself with white interests through her pursuit of Western education in England, Henry has learned isiXhosa while presumably training to fight against the apartheid regime in Namibia. She assumes that Henry will treat her with disdain and feels shame about not understanding a language she "ought to know" and alienated from the "eloquent world" around her (124).

To absolve herself of the guilt and shame she feels when confronted by Henry's radical, pro-black ideology, Frieda has sex with him. Her attitude towards the interaction indicates that the

sex is transactional –she offers her body to him as penance for her earlier rejection and to make clear to him “where [her] allegiance lies” (126). The act proves futile; afterwards Henry reminds her of her denunciation of him through a reference to her friend Olga, an indication that he has not forgiven her. Paradoxically, Frieda attempts to redress past wrongs through an act that is simultaneously a form of resistance and surrender. She resists the racist ideology her father and larger community expound by having sex with a man they do not approve of solely because of the colour of his skin. In the process, she concedes to sex with Henry in an attempt to both accommodate and appease him. Because Frieda’s understanding of her coloured identity is overdetermined by a reliance on the distancing of blackness, she chooses to negate this definition by taking blackness into herself physically through this sexual act. Though Frieda is consciously seeking power through the use of her body, her attempt to assert herself and take ownership of her racial identity takes the form of submission to oppressive gendered norms and stereotypes of coloured femininity. She struggles to assert herself in a way that will not undermine one or another aspect of her identity, but this scene proves that the recourse she has to both resistance and self-actualisation upon her return from England remains limited.

Imelda also has two romantic partners in *The Same Earth* with opposite ideological stances (Miller, 2008). When she moves to England she becomes involved with Ozzie, an Antiguan Anglophile who is deeply invested in the mythological lore of England as the greatest and most refined nation on earth. He rejects his home country, insisting instead that (128):

His true home was not Antigua, it was England, home of the Oxford dictionary. He had always felt it, and when he reached that country, friendships would happen naturally. Love would happen naturally. Every good thing that was supposed to happen in his life would happen naturally, because he would be with his fellow countrymen who spoke well, spoke with ease the big words you found in a proper dictionary.

Ozzie is a textbook case of the “Black Face, white masks” to which Fanon refers, associating with England in the way that the Martinicans in Fanon’s text associate themselves with France (2008/1967). But as with the Martinicans who expect to be welcomed with open arms and instead find themselves unwelcome foreigners upon arrival in France, Ozzie finds himself to be very much an outsider in England, excluded because of his colour, accent, class position, and nationality (whether he chooses to claim it or not). He finds it hard to form relationships, romantic and otherwise, and is lonely and isolated in England. Nonetheless, he remains committed to the country and the language, believing it to be far superior to what he has left

behind and working arduously towards proving himself worthy. Ozzie and Imelda connect in England because of their shared Caribbean heritage, but Imelda's love and yearning for home ensures that the relationship is short-lived. She cannot imagine spending her life with Ozzie and eventually ends the relationship and returns to Jamaica enraged by his suggestion that she forgo her mother's funeral and stay in England with him. Ozzie's hatred of the Caribbean make the two incompatible, and he predictably marries a white European woman after his relationship with Imelda ends.

Imelda's choice of romantic partner upon her return to Jamaica bears a striking resemblance to Henry Hendrikse, in appearance and ideology as well as in narrative function. Like Frieda, Imelda returns to rekindle a romance that began in childhood. Imelda's love interest is Joseph Martin, a childhood friend to whom she lost her virginity at 14 years old. Joseph becomes a pariah in Watersgate as a teen when his drum playing in church evokes the spiritualist rhythms of African traditional religion, causing the pastor to assume he must be conjuring evil spirits. After he is thrown out of the church Joseph moves to Kingston where he is encouraged to convert to Rastafarianism by a fellow poor, unemployed black youth who tells him, "the problem with this country is it don't make for black people. Our heart belongs to Africa. It beat to Africa" (110). During this period Imelda moves to England, and Joseph returns to Watersgate to await her return. In the small community he is known as "Watersgate's first Rastaman. Bongo Man. Bhangi Man. Nyah Man. Lion. Warrior. Heart-bless" (65). All these terms invoke the mysticism and Afrocentrism that accompany Rastafarianism in Jamaican popular culture, which despite its global association with Jamaica, is often denigrated by Jamaica's Christian majority. For this reason, Joseph remains an outsider in the community, living in a house on the hill above Watersgate where he sells kerosene oil to community members, engaging with them only for commercial purposes.

Imelda's relationship with Joseph is significant because it symbolises her unwillingness to ascribe to the social norms and restrictions of the Watersgate community upon her return. Even though Joseph has now become one of Watersgate's most vilified and notorious citizens, Imelda persists in her relationship. Like her shorn hair, this choice draws the ire of Pastor Braithwaite, who describes her as a "heathen... with her head shaved low like a man's" (11). Imelda's

relationship with Joseph is one of the acts of civil disobedience that leads to her rejection by the community. Both decisions symbolise a non-conformity that is deemed unacceptable by the larger community. This is compounded by Imelda's inability to "find entertainment in village gossip" or attend church regularly, two issues that make it "hard for her to integrate" because the community sees her unwillingness to participate in social institutions as "a superiority about her manner" (151). Imelda's attempt to assist the local community by advocating for their concerns and introducing safety measures like a Neighbourhood Watch are interpreted as her importing foreign ideas that are antithetical to the community's Christian ethos. She also challenges the norms of patriarchy and the colorist hierarchy as a dark skinned woman assuming a position of power and authority, a challenge which Pastor Braithwaite, the self-appointed community leader, refuses to entertain. In a small rural town, there are few voices of dissent with enough strength or courage to challenge the dominant social norms, and the social pressure to conform can be overwhelming. As with Watersgate, the few social institutions that exist, such as the local church and school, and key figures in the community like Pastor Braithwaite hold enough power to condemn and thereby effectively exile nonconformists. In slightly larger cities like Cape Town and Kingston, the possibility to be anonymous in a crowd and to surround oneself with likeminded people allows for more freedom. Larger cities boast the benefits of being both geographically distanced from the restrictions of smaller communities and increased diversity due to larger populations, so after she is ejected from Watersgate, Imelda resolves to move to Kingston, leaving Joseph behind because he has given no indication of plans to formalise their relationship through marriage.

She leaves as a result of her denunciation by the pastor which coincides with a flood that fills her home, forcing her to evacuate. This leaves her with the sense that "the very earth which she had known all her life was now rejecting her" (179). She is rejected not only by the land but more specifically by the *people*: the citizens of Watersgate watch her departure from behind their curtains, deeming her exodus a "punishment from God himself" (2). This is difficult for her not only because it is the land of her birth, but also because "It was supposed to be the other way around; people rejected Watersgate and every other village on the island. After that they rejected the island itself" (179). When she returns from abroad with her non-conformist ideas inspired by her time in England, she becomes a pariah. After feeling alienated abroad, she returns to find

herself an “alien” at home. This rejection leaves her with “a strong sense of injustice” after she has voluntarily returned only to find that she is now unwelcome after having pursued that which she has been taught to revere (179).

Notably, Imelda and Joseph encounter the same racist resistance to their relationship in Kingston as they do in Watersgate. When Joseph pursues Imelda and learns that she is staying in Purletta’s mother’s house in Kingston he goes to find her there. Purletta’s mother (who is an upper middle-class light-skinned Jamaican) serves a similar role to Frieda’s father in blocking the relationship between Imelda and Joseph for the sake of what she believes to be Imelda’s best interest. As an agent of white supremacy and anti-black ideology, Purletta’s mother attempts to prevent Imelda from hypogamy by preventing her relationship with Joseph. When he comes to her house seeking Imelda out, her disdain for Rastafarians compels her to lie to him that Imelda does not live there (193):

She did not feel sorry for him - he was a Rastaman. She had once read that these scruffy fellows, with their unkempt beards and long matted hair, called themselves ‘Dread’ because that was their intention - to be dreadful, to stand outside the system and inspire dread in the hearts of all decent people. Well she thought, it had worked. She did not like the sight of them, and most of them, she was certain, carried a smell. Even now she was holding her breath, not wishing to confirm her suspicions and upset her stomach.

Having little personal interaction with Rastafarians, Mrs. Johnson relies on stereotypes and assumptions to form her opinion. Though she lives with Imelda and her father, both of whom are black, she deems their blackness to be acceptable because they share her Western norms and idealisation of whiteness. Joseph’s Rastafarianism renders him unacceptable to her because the association she makes with Rastafarianism and countercultural rebellion unsettles her, and his refusal to ascribe to her standards of decency and respectability by grooming his hair and beard in traditional ways inspires her fear and disdain. She assumes that he is not only socially repulsive but also physically repulsive and carries a stench and continues to hold this belief even though she does not actually smell him. She refuses to allow him access to Imelda after he says he wants to marry her (194):

Marriage? Sure, Imelda was from the country and sure, she was black. But such things should not be held against the child. She had gone to England and improved herself, she had done a degree in law...Mrs. Johnson decided that Imelda’s rise would not be stopped. Her wings would not be clipped. She decided Imelda would not be told about the Rastaman who had come to the house to propose.

Mrs. Johnson's decision that Imelda's wings should be clipped does not take into account the fact that she herself is clipping Imelda's wings by deciding for her what kind of marriage partner is suitable. She deems this kind of wing-clipping to be acceptable because it is in line with her own standards and will make Imelda more acceptable to mainstream Jamaican society because she will not be aligning herself with the maligned culture of Rastafarianism. Even though Imelda is black, her law degree and time spent in England allow her token-status and access to upper middle-class Jamaican society, as exemplified by Mrs. Johnson, who believes Imelda's relationship with Joseph will sabotage this. This exemplifies another way in which Imelda's social aspiration and personal goals collide; she is forced to choose between Joseph and her newly acquired social standing because in the world she occupies the two cannot coexist.

Conclusion

Both Frieda and Imelda go abroad to borrow some of the social capital associated with England, but when they come back they experience negative responses to their newly acquired quasi-Britishness. The increase in social status they experience as a result of their encounter with whiteness is viewed with suspicion and distrust, and instead of the acceptance they expect, they are greeted with disdain. Frieda's mother accuses her of using her English as a catapult (179) exemplifying the ways in which their adoption of the British ways of being they have been conditioned to admire backfires. With her departure Frieda attempts to leave behind the tyranny of apartheid as well as the rules, restrictions and expectations of those who "claim [her] as their own" (101). As a form of resistance to both apartheid and her family's control over her, she chooses exile as an escape route. However, even her resistance is shown to be circumscribed by the ideology with which she has been interpellated because she heads to England, a place she has been taught to revere, to pursue further British education. Before leaving South Africa, she was already self-conscious of her assimilation of white, European culture and values. Upon her return, she finds that her extended time abroad has only intensified her feelings of alienation and her anxieties about being viewed as "an enslaved colonial" (119).

Imelda finds herself in a similar conundrum. She moves to England because of her father's conviction that she is "bigger than Watersgate" and his desire for "more for her than that,"

indicating his feeling that Watersgate is insufficient relative to the more advanced Western countries overseas (196). Imelda goes to England and finds that contrary to the utopia she expected to find, England has its own problems just like Jamaica, and both countries are made up of the same flawed earth. She gladly returns to Jamaica expecting to resettle comfortably with the additional bonus of her advanced qualification as a lawyer with which she hopes to be of use to her community. Instead she finds herself unwelcome, excluded and alienated by her “foreignness.”

Despite the veneration with which England is regarded in both their homelands, the women return to find their encounter with England to be to their detriment in the eyes of their community instead of to their benefit. This reveals England and connection with it to be both desired and derided in the community’s shared imagination, because it symbolises a competing dualism of superiority tinged with arrogance. The characters are not positioned as heroes upon return but as outcasts (Imelda’s experience as a heroic figure is short-lived and attracts more negative attention in the long run than positive). Many of their interactions with family and community members reveal the suspicion, disdain and distance that now mars their ability to connect with their community. For Frieda, her mother does not greet her welcomingly, and her interactions with people she once knew well are strained. In Imelda’s case, the education she went abroad to receive now symbolises arrogance and haughtiness in the eyes of her fellow Watersgate citizens. Even she realises that she is exhibiting “the arrogance of the returned who want to be congratulated and eternally honored for this decision to come back, as if this were their Calvary, the ultimate self-sacrifice” (179). As the narrator in *The Same Earth* points out, “Foreign had made masters out of them, for wasn’t this what they had in common with Buckra - contact with a far-off mystical land that made them superior?” (180).

While their communities interpret the changes to their worldview and personality as arrogance, the women themselves feel self-conscious about their ability to adjust and fit in again in their previous homes after their time abroad. They both express concerns about being of use to their community. Imelda’s “waking dream was simply that she should matter - that she should earn her place in the small world that she belonged to...She wanted to know that she was still important to the place and its people” (169). Frieda wants to understand the place and its people

more, and even considers staying home for good. In this way, the texts challenge the promotion of England as a destination of escape through their portrayals of the return of characters who are more committed to their homelands after being away than they were before leaving. The journey to and from England becomes a useful tool of self-discovery and self-assertion, allowing for an embrace of home that is not by default but by choice because that home can now be juxtaposed against a supposedly ideal other. Afforded the freedom of geographical mobility by modern transportation methods and the finances provided by their career paths, both women are able to travel home by choice. Though little has changed when they return home ten years later, they both consider staying permanently, evidencing their hope in the future of their homelands and their disillusionment with the unfulfilled promises of England.

The notable changes the women make upon their return to their natural hairstyles and the daring choices they make with their love lives indicate the potential they have to spark change in their communities and to serve as examples of potentially transformative revolutionary thought. As Rose Weitz (2001:670) asserts:

Like slaves' rebellious songs, women's rebellious hairstyles can allow them to distance themselves from the system that would subordinate them, to express their dissatisfaction, to identify like-minded others, and to challenge others to think about their own actions and beliefs. Thus, these everyday, apparently trivial, individual acts of resistance offer the potential to spark social change and, in the long run, to shift the balance of power between social groups.

Similarly, by refusing to conform to the patterns of racialised partner-choice advocated by their family and community, they resist dangerous norms that further entrench colorist hierarchies. In chapter two I discuss the way women of colour's romantic relationships with lighter-skinned and white men are pathologised, especially because of the assumption of an economic motive. In those instances, social institutions such as the church and community work to regulate the conditions under which sexual relations occur and with whom. This is compounded by the social pressures to obey the restrictions of a pigmentocratic social structure. This idea is revisited here in the cases of these two characters, both of whom are discouraged from "dating down" by communities that police their choices and their bodies under the guise of looking out for their best interests. The fact that both women only find the strength to rebel while abroad exemplifies the tenacity of the ideals they are rebelling against and the strength and influence of the agents who enforce it. However, although as Kei Miller points out in the epigraph to this chapter, "there

is no such thing as return,” the revolving door of re-diasporisation creates necessary new selves and new ways of being that reshape both home and “foreign.”

Conclusion: Multi/Non-racial Fictions

Within complex and ever shifting realms of power relations, do we position ourselves on the side of colonizing mentality? Or do we continue to stand in political resistance with the oppressed, ready to offer our ways of seeing and theorizing, of making culture, towards that revolutionary effort which seeks to create space where there is unlimited access to the pleasure and power of knowing, where transformation is possible? This choice is crucial. (hooks, 1989:145)

In response to Cape Town's annual "One City Many Cultures Festival" campaign initiated in 1998 by the *Cape Times*, Suren Pillay (1999) asserted:

As a nation, a community, a religious group, a 'race' and ethnic identity, when we choose to be one thing it is because we are not something else. That is what the celebration of Cape Town as One City with Many Cultures does. It forces us to be one thing: a cultural identity. One cultural identity, not a mixed cultural identity, a hybrid cultural identity, a shared cultural identity, but different, separate cultural identities. It celebrates what we don't have in common, in a town, in a country, with 400 years of experience with this. It does not challenge us to change our prejudices, but makes us feel comfortable with them, it gives them new life, allowing them to dance in the robes of new legitimacy.

In his comment, Pillay echoes the now common refrain that no city in South Africa has lived up to the optimistic ethos of social and racial harmony encapsulated by Desmond Tutu's "rainbow nation" proclamation, and perhaps Cape Town least of all. It is an indictment of the attempt to neatly tie up prejudices with a bow of multiracialism and proceed into the future without sufficient reflection on the wreckage wrought by racial intolerance.

In the case of South Africa, the call for non-racialism began as the "rallying cry of the oppressed" and eventually "came to express a deep popular commitment to eradicating both the practices of apartheid and the system of ideas concerning 'race' on which these practices rested" (Sharp, 1998:243). Post-apartheid, this initially altruistic intention has been enshrined in the constitution⁴⁵ and conscripted by the state, which many argue prioritises the interests of the white minority and emerging black upper-middle-class over the majority black population. A similar argument can be made in the context of many nations in the Caribbean in the post-independence era, where the predominantly brown politicians who came into power at the end of colonialism

⁴⁵ Chapter 1 of the Constitution of South Africa states: "The Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values: (a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. (b) Non-racialism and non-sexism" (Constitution of South Africa Act No. 108, 1996).

had a vested interest in promoting the concept of non-racialism in their own self-interest. In the post-independence era, many have argued that these promotions of non-racialism have allowed for the marginalisation of blackness and the ongoing prioritisation of the lighter-skinned and white minority by not challenging or adequately redressing racial dominance and the consequences thereof. As such, in the case of Jamaica in particular, “the culture of African Jamaicans has been marginalised in the construction of the nation-state” (Cooper, 2012). There have even been calls to “revise [Jamaica’s] fictive national motto, rejecting the homogenising myth of multicultural assimilation” (Cooper, 2012). Thus, it can be argued that the once admirable aim of racial harmony encapsulated in the concept of non-racialism has been co-opted for the maintenance of the status quo, namely, the hegemony of white Western ideals.

In both contexts, the result of colonialism and white hegemonic power has been that wealth, success, social status and privilege is associated with whiteness. What has emerged from this prevailing ethos of non- and multi-racialism is an ongoing privileging of Eurocentric features and whiteness, despite the pretences to the contrary. The ongoing perpetuation of colorism also belies the current preoccupation with the concept of “post-racialism,” which suggests that we are entering an era in which race is no longer essential to our identities. In South Africa, the University of Cape Town student newspaper came under fire in 2013 for hosting a ‘Most Attractive Race’ competition, for which students were asked to vote on which race they found most attractive, choosing from Caucasian, Indian, Coloured, African, Asian, and Mixed. The largest percentage of the small and unrepresentative poll (38%) voted for “Caucasians” as the most attractive race, and the lowest percentage (8%) voted for “Africans” as the most attractive race (McDonald, 2013). Both the existence and outcome of this poll belie the hope that as a society we are somehow “post-race.” Race, and specifically skin colour, continues to overdetermine every aspect of our lived experience, from how we speak and behave, to who we marry and where we live.

Throughout this dissertation, I have charted a path through the various technologies of oppression that support the perpetuation of intersectional colour, class and gender-based discrimination as portrayed in contemporary literature of the Anglophone Caribbean and the Cape region of South Africa. The texts I analysed depict characters who are confined by systems

of interlocked systems of discrimination inherited from apartheid and colonialism. These characters attempt to navigate around the glass ceilings created by these circumstances using various means, including language, romance, the politics of respectability and migration, but all of these attempts result not only in alienation from themselves but from their communities. This is confirmed by the work of many scholars who analyse the psychological impact of racism and colorism such as Frantz Fanon and more recently colorism scholar Ronald E. Hall, who asserts that “for people of colour who must assimilate within a hostile, alien Eurocentric environment, their ability to thrive is compromised. Their human predisposition to idealise self is interrupted by Eurocentric influences, which define the non-Eurocentric as inferior” (2013:1). For the characters portrayed in this dissertation, their methods of escape and attempts at negotiation of the stringent racial and social hierarchy are met with a paradoxical combination of derision and desire that never allows them to be fully at ease, even if they are able to achieve the increased social status they aspire to.

In my analysis, I have focused on the language used to convey colorist ideology, mining the texts for the linguistic cues and narrative structures that reveal the inner workings of colorism and the other forms of discrimination with which colorism overlaps and intersects. I began with the topic of linguistic imperialism because language is the way we shape our worlds, so if our ability to speak our truth is compromised by the pressure to assimilate or adopt other ways of speaking, our world is fundamentally shifted. Notably, this concept of “compromise” proves itself to be a recurring one throughout the chapter, as the authors express their unwillingness to compromise on the use of local dialect in their writing and the characters struggle to navigate an uncompromising social landscape that requires surrender of the ways of speaking that come most naturally to them in favour of so-called “standard British English.” They feel compelled to do so to “make up for” their non-European appearance, since the European phenotype and British English are idealised in their societies. This ideology is supported by their communities, which reinforces the privileging of whiteness and ways of speaking associated with whiteness, while paradoxically deriding them for attempting to approximate so-called “white” accents. As the chapter shows, the lighter-skinned female character is able to achieve the absorption into whiteness that she desires, but only in exchange for the complete surrender of all ties to her family and the larger coloured community. This outcome is denied the dark-skinned male

character against which she is juxtaposed, ostensibly because his black masculinity and lower-class background is perceived as too threatening to be accepted into the upper echelons of society. Both characters experience this linguistic imperialism as an onslaught on their “mental universe” and are profoundly affected by the denigration of themselves and their culture into which they are co-opted, proving language to be a fraught terrain in post-colonial/apartheid societies that continues to perpetuate the interests of whiteness (wa Thiong’o, 1986:16).

As with accents, interracial desire and specifically hypergamy are also viewed as routes to increased social status for members of disesteemed racial groups. As the texts portray, interracial relationships are discouraged by family and community members because they are viewed as transgressive and therefore destabilising of the social order. In the novels I analyse, the interracial relationships depicted ultimately end with negative consequences for the female characters, both of whom are women of colour. They experience madness, ostracism, abuse and death as a result of their ill-fated transgressions across the colour line. Through this depiction, I argue that the authors invert the portrayal of blackness as a contagion to whiteness, instead portraying white/European men as a corrupting influence that derail the young women’s otherwise prosperous futures. This is complicated by the link between madness and interracial desire established in the texts, which I read as a commentary on the madness of the systems the characters function within, which paradoxically punishes them for desiring that which they are taught is most desirable.

The politics of respectability, as defined by the British Victorian standard, is shown to be another avenue through which women of colour attempt to circumvent intersectional oppression and counteract the controlling images associated with their race, class and gender. In exchange for presenting themselves as respectable women, the characters hope to be rewarded with increased status, but find that though they are able to achieve a measure of success, their positions are never validated with the security they yearn for. The boundaries of whiteness and of respectability continually shift and reposition themselves just out of reach. Additionally, the exacting code of conduct required to meet the expectations of respectability proves itself to be untenable under the conditions of apartheid and colonialism, rendering their aims unattainable. The family unit is shown to be an active agent in racial socialisation throughout this dissertation

and in the case of respectability, which is largely portrayed as women's domain, mothers in particular are depicted as playing a significant role in interpellating their daughters into the ideology of the politics of respectability.

I conclude with the topic of exile, a theme which runs throughout the chapters and features as a common trope in postcolonial fiction. The characters portrayed in chapter four view exile as an escape from the oppressive societies they occupy, and migrate to England in search of opportunity and an escape from racism and colorism that they are indoctrinated to believe they will find abroad. Though they do not encounter the utopia they expected, the women return with transformed, more radical perspectives on whiteness and eurocentrism. These views are not welcomed by their home communities, and they are dismayed to find that the social capital they have acquired in the metropole works to their disadvantage rather than in their favour, as their encounter with whiteness is viewed with suspicion and they are met with disdain. Through their critique of England, the texts featured in this chapter can be read as inversions of the stereotypical promotion of England because the main characters are more committed to their homelands upon return, viewing their decade long sojourns in the UK as tools of self-discovery that ultimately lead to their reaffirmed self-assertion and an embrace of home.

One significant theme running throughout my analysis of the portrayal of the interpellation of racial ideology is the role that parents and other extended family members play in encouraging children to engage in forms of assimilation to mitigate discrimination. In each instance, these attempts at assimilation are met by opposition from people all along the colour spectrum in the larger community. Though the hegemonic rules of whiteness that overwrite our current cultural context seem to mandate assimilation of Western norms within communities of colour, when attempted, this assimilation is viewed as disloyal, pretentious or "uppity." Both the parents' encouragement to assimilate and the community's negative response reveals an investment in the ideology of white (and specifically white British) supremacy and co-optation into the policing of the imagined boundaries of whiteness. Colorism is shown to have an impact on the character's ability to circumvent racial discrimination because the likelihood of achieving their goals and receiving positive reinforcement is higher for lighter skinned characters, while darker skinned characters experience more difficulty and resistance from their communities and less reward,

even when employing the same methods.

Thus far there has not been a body of work to draw these two contexts together on the topic of colorism, which itself is an underexplored phenomenon. Through this comparative analysis, the unique particularities of each context have made themselves manifest. This particular comparison has also served the purpose of illuminating the large scale impact of the British colonial project across locations, taking the microscope off one context to gain a wider perspective of the impact of colonialism. This perspective has surfaced many notable similarities in the manifestation of cultural conflict and perpetuation of colonial ideology. Most of the literature analysed in this dissertation have also been texts that have not yet received significant critical attention, so this project draws them into the academic conversation. This work also challenges the dominant narratives of colorism which emphasises self-hatred and skin bleaching as outcomes of the pressure of compounded discrimination. The texts investigated here present a variety of alternative methods employed to navigate colorism that are not motivated by hatred of self, but by hatred of and frustration with the structural oppression enshrined in the pigmentocratic hierarchies they are forced to operate within.

Notably, all of the texts return retrospectively to critical moments in the histories of the nations they depict. This indicates a contemporary urgency to revisit the past and reassess those occurrences which we are working hardest to sweep under the rug. In current times, there is a tendency to paint those moments of nascent, recent and impending liberation with a brush of either nostalgia or remorse and to leave those painful memories in the past. But through their refocusing on the past in the present, these authors demand that we revisit these moments and learn from them, as the remnants of their trauma are still with us today. What we see most clearly through the portrayals in the texts, especially those that pivot from past to present, is that remarkably little has changed in terms of attitudes towards race, colour and class, and in some cases, as in the case of the pathologisation of interracial desire, colonial era ideology is becoming even more firmly entrenched in the social fabric of our societies as it moves from a legally enforced restriction to a social “norm.” As Jemima Pierre asserts, these texts serve as canaries in the coal mine alerting us to the ways in which “whiteness is being more firmly entrenched into the global economic and cultural order” (2012:98).

These findings are all the more troubling in these contexts of imposed, inauthentic, blind multiculturalism. In an essay entitled “The Latin Americanization of U.S. Race Relations: A New Pigmentocracy,” Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and David R. Dietrich evaluate the increasing push towards deracialisation in America and suggest that the rules for racial stratification in the US are beginning to replicate that of Latin America (2009). Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich posit that this shift is a distressing one however, as this move does not bode well for US race relations. They foresee that “[a]s a Latin America-like society, the United States will become a society with more rather than less racial inequality, but with a reduced forum for racial contestation. The apparent blessing of “not seeing race” will become a curse for those struggling for racial justice in the years to come” (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2009:60). Bonilla-Silva’s and Dietrich’s conclusions confirm the prediction that issues like colorism and the urgent need for decolonisation will be pushed further down the priority list if we continue to pretend as though the legacies of colonialism and apartheid have been papered over by the proclamations of the present, as “the adoption of non-racialism...silences discussions of race and hides the real pressures, limiting disruptions and dismantling actions” (Knaus & Brown, 2015:195).

There is much that remains to be said about the lingering impact of empire on the particular conceptualisations of colour and class within post-colonial spaces. The growing field of colorism studies has begun this work, analysing the vast matrix of intersectional discrimination, both inter- and intra- racially, that impacts on the lives of people all along the colour spectrum. Much of this research thus far has focused on women, and an interesting potential area of future research includes the impact of colorism on men, which remains under-examined. Throughout this dissertation I have shown that among the many legacies of the unreconciled history of British colonialism and apartheid is a complex and fraught relationship to Englishness and whiteness that remains unresolved. Though the pressure to succumb to those powers that work to reinforce systems of oppression is unrelenting, the hope is that more people will take up bell hooks call to position themselves against the “colonizing mentality,” ushering forth a world in which transformation is not only possible, but inevitable (hooks, 1990:145).

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