Consuming the Other: The Commodification of Culture

in the Postcolonial Anglophone World

by

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ABSTRACT

This project examines different modes of cultural production from the

postcolonial Anglophone world to identify how marginal populations have either been

subjugated or empowered by various forms of consumerism. Four case studies

specifically follow the flow of products, resources, and labor either in the colonies or

London. In doing so, these investigations reveal how neocolonial systems both radiate

from old imperial centers and occupy postcolonial countries. Using this method

corroborates contemporary postcolonial theory positing that modern "Empire" is now

amorphous and stateless rather than constrained to the metropole and colony. The

temporal progression of each chapter traces how commodification and resource

exploitation has evolved from colonial to contemporary periods. Each section of this

study consequently considers geography and time to show how consumer culture grew

via imperialism, yet also supported *and* challenged the progression of colonial conquest.

Accordingly, as empire and consumerism have transformed alongside each other, so too

have the tools that marginal groups use to fight against economic and cultural

subjugation. Novels remain as one traditional format – and consumer product – that can

resist the effects of colonization. Other contemporary postcolonial artists, however, use

different forms of media to subvert or challenge modes of neocolonial oppression. Texts

such as screenplays, low-budget films, memoirs, fashion subcultures, music videos, and

advertisements illuminate how postcolonial groups represent themselves. Altogether,

these various cultural productions illuminate how marginalized populations have used

consumer products and practices to disrupt global economies that continue to profit from

the commodification, appropriation, or subjugation of minority populations.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my parents Joseph and Ximena. Without their life-long

sacrifices, I would not have had the chance to pursue a career in higher-education. Thank

you, dad, for always encouraging me to do my best and never settle for less. Ma, you are

my super-hero and constantly reminding me to smile. Finally, I want to thank my dog,

Roxy, for always being by my side through all the ups and downs that occurred during

my six years at Arizona State University.

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   In May 2012, the exterior of a London Poundland was transformed overnight

from a blank wall to a political statement. The discount store depicted a spray-painted

image of a young Asian boy at a sewing machine, stitching together a chain of Union

Jack flags. The garland was brilliantly colored while the young worker's appearance was

a drab combination of black and white tones. Decorations like these had become

commonplace in the city as Londoners were celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee

and the Summer Olympics. However, the guerilla art installation undercut the celebration

of British national pride by exposing how child labor was implicated in manufacturing

the adornments for these patriotic events.

Fig. 1 Banksy's "Slave Labor" from: Kevin Holmes, "Your Guide to the Best Art at the London Olympics This Summer*," Creators.com,* 26 July 2012.

Hundreds of Londoners quickly flocked to the Haringey store to observe and photograph the image. The mural's politically-charged message led many critics and news outlets to recognize that the painting was by Britain's most famous street artist, Banksy. Undoubtedly, the stencil work and social commentary of the mural matched Banksy's other famous statue work and paintings. The Briton often chooses contested spaces like the West Bank's border wall or the Calais refugee camp as the location for his street art. Accordingly, the wall of a North London Poundland was an appropriate setting for Banksy's latest work "Slave Labor." *The Sunday Times* revealed in 2010 that a seven-year-old boy was working ninety-eight hours a week in an Indian sweatshop that supplied the discount retailer its Christmas decorations (Smith). The products created by children like Ravi were distributed to various Poundlands and sold to British consumers for nominal prices. These items included the inexpensive patriotic adornments that were created for the Queen's anniversary and 2012 London Olympics. Anti-Slavery International reported that Ravi – who made only seven pence an hour – is one of about fifty-thousand youths that are forced into labor in Delhi ("Seven-Year Old Boy").

"Slave Labor" helped draw attention to how British consumer demands and multinational corporations maintain oppression in postcolonial nations such as India. In this sense, the work of empire is no longer being conducted by state operations, but economic forces that stem from the former imperial power. Banksy used Ravi's story and

the ongoing celebrations of British pride and culture to expose how everyday consumer

purchases have global consequences. Specifically, the demand for cheap decorations

leads Poundland to outsource labor that is often "unseen" by Britons in the First World.

Populations in the developing nations are therefore forced into unregulated and inhuman

working conditions to satisfy the orders of a Western company. The connection here

between Britain and India is not a coincidence, but a reflection of how colonial power

continues to survive and dominate formerly subjugated areas. As such, if postcolonial

scholars are attempting to understand how empire has evolved in an increasingly

globalized and neoliberal world, transnational consumerism is a practice that must be

interrogated as it dominates marginal communities in different and often undetected

ways.

Consuming the Other situates itself at the intersection of postcolonial studies and

consumerism, illuminating how formerly colonized populations, cultures, and

environments are participating in, rejecting, or transforming consumerism to reclaim

some sense of agency. Empire helped create the interconnected trade routes and supply

chains that characterize today's globalized economy where resources and labor flow from

the Global South to the North and later return as commodities for sale.[1] These

commercial relationships, however, are not equal, nor do they always enhance global

equity. Rather, former European empires continue to build economic and political power

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[1] The Global South refers to the collective of postcolonial and developing nations that are linked together by their shared history of colonization, exploitation, and neo-imperialism. Developed countries – which include the current G8 nations – are part of the Global North. The North is the benefactor of past colonial projects and neo-imperial activities that overtake resources, labor, people, and non-human inhabitants from the South.

by exploiting labor, destroying ecosystems, and commodifying marginal communities' cultures.

This project examines different modes of cultural production from the postcolonial Anglophone world to identify how marginal populations have been subjugated and empowered – sometimes simultaneously – by various forms of consumerism. Four case studies follow the flow of products, resources, and labor either in the colonies or London. In doing so, these investigations reveal how neocolonial systems both radiate from old imperial centers and occupy postcolonial countries. Each chapter corroborates contemporary postcolonial theory positing that modern "Empire" is now amorphous and stateless rather than constrained to the metropole and colony.[2] This project begins with a comparison between colonial-era India and modern-day Congo, then the geographic focus moves to post-imperial London, and finally the study returns to the former colonies by focusing on Sudan and Nigeria. The trajectory of this study demonstrates how consumerism – along with oppression – passes interchangeably throughout post-imperial and postcolonial spaces.

The temporal progression of each chapter traces how commodification and resource exploitation has evolved from colonial to contemporary periods. Each chapter considers geography and time to show how consumer culture grew via imperialism, yet

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[2] Throughout this project, I use "Empire" to denote what Hardt and Negri identify as the contemporary form of the global colonial project. I define the scholars' term later in this introduction to illustrate how modern "Empire" is different than empire. The latter process is the past form of colonization where a European nation-state takes over a foreign area.

also supported *and* challenged the progression of colonial conquest. As empire and

consumerism have transformed alongside each other, so too have the tools that marginal

groups use to fight against economic and cultural subjugation. Novels continue to be

produced in order to illustrate the identity and agency of postcolonial nations.

Accordingly, Imre Szeman argues that texts about formerly colonized areas help

peripheral communities resist misrepresentation and silencing by "preserving or

defending the integrity of one's own community against threatening outside forces" (26).

Other contemporary postcolonial artists, however, use different forms of media to

subvert, challenge, or accept modes of neocolonial oppression.[3] Texts such as

screenplays, low-budget films, memoirs, fashion subcultures, music videos, and

advertisements illuminate how postcolonial groups represent themselves. These forms of

media also become products that circulate throughout the world and are consumed by the

citizens of the Global North and South alike. Consequently, these contemporary

postcolonial artists expand their range beyond the academy and literary world and into

popular culture. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), Sam Selvon's *The Lonely*

Londoners (1956) and *Moses Ascending* (1975), Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail* (2003),

Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* (2010), and Christie Watson's *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away*

(2011) all demonstrate how novels continue to interrogate the ongoing oppression of

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[3] While discussions about postcolonial agency focus on challenging neocolonial forces like multinational corporations, there are instances of marginalized communities participating within the systems that oppress them. The first chapter delves into this issue by questioning how the Congolese Sapeurs, a modern fashionista sub-culture, allow Western companies to commodify their styles of dress. The following section of this project does a similar investigation by questioning how South Asian immigrants invested in neoliberal agendas to gain societal standing in 1980s London.

formerly colonized people. Yet, Hanif Kureishi's screenplay and film *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), along with Mende Nazer's memoir *Slave* (2006), show that artists in the Anglophone world also use other "texts" to represent culture and agency. Contemporary postcolonial subcultures like the Congolese Sapeurs have even diversified their tactics by using designer clothing and a sartorial code of ethics to create a hybridized style that challenges European stereotypes of the colonized. Altogether, these various cultural productions illuminate how marginalized populations have used consumer products and practices to interrupt how global economies commodify, appropriate, or subjugate minority populations

Selling the Colonial Project

British colonization was spurred and supported by various methods, including the marketing and selling of imperial ideology. Different economic techniques helped expand Britain's global power. Extracting natural resources and labor at low costs from the colonies benefitted the empire as it could sell the goods it produced and continue to build its infrastructure. While this economic aspect has been covered by various scholars, few studies have focused on how consumerism played a part in colonization. Anne McClintock, for example, notes that the Victorian Era birthed the advertising industry, which helped to sell empire's ideology to both colonizer and colonized. Particularly, notions of racial superiority were created and disseminated via British companies by using domestic commodities used by consumers across the colonies. McClintock specifically identifies that soap helped "sell" empire since "as a cheap and portable

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domestic commodity, it could persuasively mediate the Victorian poetics of racial

hygiene and imperial progress" (209). As such, the process of colonization associated

itself with developing cleanliness, civility, whiteness, and an advanced British society

that was juxtaposed to the filthy, savage, non-white, and backward existence of foreign

groups. The ability to purchase and use soap therefore identified Britons as the

"powerful" colonizers while foreign subjects who were unable to fulfill this consumer

practice were deemed deserving of subjugation. McClintock labels this practice as

"commodity racism," which

> could package, market and distribute evolutionary racism on a hitherto
> unimagined scale. No preexisting form of organized racism had ever before been
> able to reach so large and so differentiated a mass of the populace. Thus, as
> domestic commodities were mass marketed through their appeal to imperial
> jingoism, commodity jingoism itself helped reinvent and maintain British national
> unity in the face of deepening imperial competition and colonial resistance. (209)

Soap as a fetishized product, therefore, helped to sell the racial and political ideologies of

the British Empire. Images that depicted imperial conquest and civilizing missions on

shipping crates or advertisements also helped to transport the rhetoric of empire

throughout the realm. Ultimately, consumerism was at the center of this economic

practice since purchasing soap helped to financially and ideologically support the

colonial project that defined and reinforced Britain's power, culture, and identity.

Wulf D. Hund explores how various European empires used human zoos to

promote imperialism. These popular events allowed spectators to visually consume the

"prizes" of conquest as colonized people, animals, and environments were put on display

for Western eyes. Hund identifies the 1931 Exposition colonial internationale near Paris

as a pivotal moment where advertising, racism, and consumerism blended to sell the

colonial project to various European populations. Native populations from the French

colonies were presented alongside other "exotic" plants and animals in exhibits that

"intended to demonstrate the amenities of colonialism as well as the simpleness and

harmlessness of the colonial subjects to the metropolitan populace" (Hund 26).

Colonization was marketed as a humane process that helped Europeans bring salvation to

"savages." Accordingly, this cruel spectacle had already been used by other global

powers such as the British, who hosted the first Great Exposition in London's Crystal

Palace in 1851. The inaugural event – and the subsequent 1854 Exposition – displayed

the myriad "trophies" of plants, animals, cultural objects, and people from across the

colonies to an estimated six million visitors that year. These foreign "oddities" were

presented alongside the West's latest technological advancements – a calculated

juxtaposition that reinforced notions of European civility and white supremacy. While

upper-class citizens were able to pay the £2-3 entrance fee, the massive working

population entered the Exposition when the price was eventually lowered to a shilling

(Picard). Hund argues that fluctuation of the admittance fee appealed to a wider consumer

base that "transformed wide sections of the population into supporters of imperialism and

allowed commodity holders and exhibition organizers to sell imperialism to the public"

(27). The success of Britain's colonial spectacle helped ensure the survival of the event as

World Fairs in Paris (1889) and Chicago (1893) continued the Western tradition. The

U.S. event was unique however as Native Americans were exhibited alongside consumer

products that depicted racist characterizations of "noble savages" and "black mammies"

(Hund 26). Ultimately, human zoos provided both European and American consumers

products – both material and biological – that celebrated colonization, white supremacy, and Western "civilization."

A New Brand of "Empire"

In the 20th and 21st century, the relationship between consumerism and the colonial project has shifted as traditional empires, in formal terms, declined. However, a new struggle between the developing and developed world exists in a more globalized environment. Postcolonial theory has historically focused on how formerly subjugated groups have developed hybridized identities and new forms of agency to challenge the social and cultural impositions of the past. Oppressed people from postcolonial nations typically directed these strategies towards a former European power. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri criticized this obsolete, geographic-based principle. Both scholars found that the liberating strategies promoted by the field were no longer viable as "postcolonial theorists who advocate a politics of difference, fluidity, and hybridity in order to challenge the binaries and essentialism of modern sovereignty have been outflanked by the strategies of power (138). The "real enemy" that needs to be confronted therefore is a stateless, decentralized, and globalized "Empire" that is capable of controlling global exchanges. Multinational corporations maintain the strength of "Empire" as they supersede the power and boundaries of countries by directing labor and resources across the world. In doing so, these companies and their international supply chains produce "not only commodities but also subjectivities" (Hardt and Negri 32) that can undermine the efforts of ongoing decolonization projects.

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Scholars celebrate the power of cultural difference because marginal communities can use their liminal positions to redefine imposed notions of nationality, race, gender, ability, and power. However, Shaobo Xie claims that hybrid identities and multicultural societies eventually come under the control of "Empire" as

> Capitalism grants areas, nation-states, and communities of different races, cultural practices and ethnic traditions uniform membership in the capitalist club, to subsume them under the global Empire of capital, and ultimately to integrate plural trajectories of modernity along a single route of development. When I [Xie] talk about capitalism feeding on difference, I am referring to those concrete strategies and practices of customizing commodities to suit local preferences and tastes, of building Chevrolets, Toyotas, BMWs, Boeings, Airbuses, Toshiba lap-top computers and refrigerators, NECs, computer software, to meet local needs and likes, of fostering capitalists and technocrats with different racial features, wearing different ethnic costumes, and eating different ethnic foods, of creating an America-centred structure of feeling and commodity-fetishism in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Tibet, Taiwan, Indonesia, Canada, Colombia, and the former Yugoslavia. (66)

Postcolonial nations subsequently become a part of the new colonial project as global capitalism adapts to the needs of a diverse consumer base. Difference becomes commodified and eventually supply chains and multinational corporations deliver products that make numerous areas more similar.[4] As such, the celebrated strength of hybridity can no longer challenge newer forms of colonization. The emergence of "Empire" and its geographically ubiquitous nature has come about as the spatial divisions between the Global North and South are now interconnected through commerce, media,

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[4] Xie lists many of these products in his explanation of global capitalism under "Empire." Subsequent chapters in this project also consider how pop music, high-fashion, beer advertisements, and publishing companies commodify postcolonial difference and undermine the agency of marginal people. Specifically, in chapter one, the Congolese Sapeurs' hybrid style of dress is appropriated by Western companies that in turn sell the group's clothing to consumers throughout the world.

and the Internet. The influence of consumer culture therefore grows internationally, as people fetishize goods that endow them with social capital and economic standing. Globalization drives postcolonial groups to participate in this process, yet these communities do not simply obey the "Empire's" rule. Rather, as this project uncovers, disempowered individuals locate ways of undermining or shifting consumer practices to disrupt how powerful products function in an international context.

While many more consumers are now involved in the international market, this has also created a global lower class – that includes subaltern populations – that is detrimentally affected by the economic exploitation and environmental devastation needed for capitalism to thrive. Participating in a consumer society is very difficult for these people as they do not always have access to the capital or materials necessary to possess symbolic goods. Chapter one and two exemplify this struggle as subjects in colonial India, postcolonial Congo, and post-imperial London risk their health or financial means to either purchase European clothing or urban space. These products denote power, status, and belonging within both post-imperial and postcolonial spaces. Disempowered characters or subcultures seek out these commodities so as to participate in the empowering practices of consumer culture. Correspondingly, Zygmunt Bauman notes, "If 'being poor' once derived its meaning from the condition of being unemployed, today it draws it meaning primarily from the plight of a flawed consumer" (*Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* 1). More affluent consumers are provided dignity and power in the global environment unlike those left outside of it.

Paul Gilroy, however, identifies that peripheral groups are still able to influence how consumerism functions and attain social standing within the interconnected world. Specifically, the modern economic practices of African-Americans help distinguish how disempowered and formerly subjugated groups attempt to use consumer culture to claim their status as citizens and, indeed, human beings. Gilroy points to conspicuous consumption as the means by which African-Americans are able to

> win and to compel recognition as human beings, as fellow citizens and as Americans with a profile that belied the lowly, racial specifications of foolish, childlike nergohood. In certain circumstances, owning or being seen to use the right object could include or support the anticipatory actions performed by these would-be humans as their inconceivable humanity was placed provocatively on display. (*Darker than Blue* 9)

Here, the attention is drawn to African-American consumers, yet this study extends this example to Black Britons as both groups have experienced similar forms subjugation and dehumanization due to colonization.[5] Black consumers on both sides of the Atlantic sought out certain products to attain social respect and create their own cultural worlds. The collective use of consumerism by both communities shows how agency can function as an empowering force regardless of geographic difference. Automobile manufacturers like Cadillac have become fetishized brands in the trans-Atlantic black community, symbolizing social success in a world mostly governed by the policies and prejudices of white Western populations. Black consumers have endowed Cadillacs with symbolic capital that reflects the ability to overcome the long-lasting injustices of slavery and

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[5] A connection Gilroy also makes in *Darker Than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture*.

institutional racism.[6] In turn, Cadillac designs their products to satisfy an expanding

black-customer base. Marginalized communities can exploit their power to generate

popular trends so as to influence industries and white consumers while troubling long-

held notions about race, class, or citizenship.

Despite shifting the operations of consumer culture, dominant groups can retain

their powerful positions over marginalized people. With regard to the United States, bell

hooks identifies that difference or "Otherness" becomes an attractive attribute or

commodity that can be sold to white consumers by advertising firms or corporations.

Aspects of minority culture such as cuisine, dress, or music can be viewed as "exotic" or

"primitive" products that can bring excitement and experience to curious outsiders. As

such, hooks argues that

> it is within the commercial realm of advertising that the drama of Otherness finds
> expression. Encounters with Otherness are clearly marked as more exciting, more
> intense, and more threatening…In the cultural marketplace the Other is coded as
> having the capacity to be more alive. (26)

Commodifying or appropriating marginal cultures exploits disempowered populations

and neutralizes attempts at agency. For example, while African-Americans may be able

to influence the social capital of Cadillacs, the company can advertise that famous black

rappers prefer their cars. Cadillacs then become these objects of Otherness which white

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[6] White consumers also fetishize Cadillacs, yet this group interact with the car brand in a
different fashion as they already have access to the body politic, social privileges, and
symbolic products. Gilroy notes that in the 1930s, Cadillac expressed that they did not
want their cars sold to African-Americans (49). The right to possess property is therefore
central to how dominant society attempts to disallow black consumers from gaining
social standing.

consumers can purchase and "experience" an aspect of minority culture.[7] Like Gilroy,

hooks' geographic focus is the U.S., yet both scholars' ideas translate across the Atlantic

as black Britons, South Asians, and other minorities experience similar forms of material

exploitation. The second chapter of this project delves into this issue as it analyzes how

Sam Selvon's Caribbean immigrant characters have their music, food, and dance forms

appropriated by white Londoners in the post-WWII era. Regardless of location, however,

hooks emphasizes how power functions in these cultural transactions and notes that "to

seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one's

mainstream positionality" (22). Rather, privileged groups can continue to dominate,

exploit, and sometimes profit off of minorities through consumerism.

Economics have been tied to – and even motivated – the process of colonization,

yet the academy has largely ignored how consumerism buttresses the ongoing work of

"Empire." My project draws attention to how consumerism and global markets affect

postcolonial groups and how these communities respond to this form of neo-colonialism.

Graham Huggan's work on the "postcolonial exotic" suggests that the field "has

capitalized on its perceived marginality while helping turn marginality itself into a

valuable intellectual commodity" (viii). Indeed, academia, publishing houses, and

postcolonial authors have used peripheral identity, culture, and narratives to market a

certain "exoticness" and commodify the field. This study, however, examines how

postcolonial individuals, groups, or environments are becoming products themselves and

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[7] Take for instance Cadillac's 2011 Super Bowl commercial that featured white-American rapper Eminem. This add is an instance of African-American culture being commodified and appropriated through two products.

sold to Western consumers, companies, or states. Certain chapters also analyze how commodified postcolonial subjects are engaging in particular consumer practices to practice economic forms of agency. As such, the characters in these texts are actively resisting their subjugation by appropriating the practices of their new masters.

Consuming the Other begins by examining Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* along with music videos, advertisements, and fashion books about the Sapeurs, a subculture of Congolese "dandies." Indian and Congolese groups adopt and augment colonial dress to mimic European identity. This transition is crucial, as British and French Empires imposed sartorial regulations to control foreign bodies. Anand's text and the Sapeurs' style exemplify how clothing functioned as a restrictive *or* liberating cultural product in different colonies. Bakha, the Indian protagonist in *Untouchable*, desires to dress like his English masters by wearing pieces of colonial uniform. By purchasing a pith hat or military boots, the young latrine-cleaner hopes to rid himself of his lowly social position and gain the powerful national and racial identity of the colonizers. A somewhat similar situation occurs in colonial-era Congo, as young house servants become attracted to the dress of their European masters. The Sapeurs, a sub-culture dedicated to the use of foreign clothing, eventually become the focus of modern marketing campaigns and music videos. While clothing is used as a form of cultural restraint in both colonies, oppressed communities create alternatives that reject or subvert European styles of dress. In Anand's novel, this strategy is implemented by adhering to Mahatma Gandhi's *Swadeshi* movement, which helped to galvanize India's national and economy identity by producing homespun clothing. The Sapuers wear dazzling outfits – both during and after

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empire – to invent contemporary stylistic aesthetics and performances that disrupt the traditional use and image of "The Empire's Clothes."

The second chapter moves away from the colonies and to post-imperial London, pairing Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and *Moses Ascending* with Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette.* Together, these texts detail how Caribbean and South Asian immigrants purchase urban property and create businesses to help marginalized groups establish themselves in the former metropole. These alternative economies create spaces to empower black entrepreneurs and assist in destabilizing their neighborhood's racial hierarchy. Henri Lefebvre's discussion of space and the "right to the city" shows how property ownership allows peripheral communities to change the purpose and identity of urban areas. Selvon's main character, Moses, buys a house to offer both documented and undocumented immigrants space to settle in London. The economic relationships between landlord and tenants gradually change the way black and white Britons see each other as the city is becoming more diverse after WWII. In Kureishi's screenplay and film, Omar looks to selling cocaine and electronics to acquire a launderette to gaining social standing as a business owner. The young South Asian entrepreneur partners with a white Briton named Johnny to build a small economic empire. Both Moses and Omar subsequently use unexpected strategies to interrupt London's dominant financial and social networks while also building a more multicultural urban space.

In chapter three, Mende Nazer's memoir *Slave* and Chris Abani's novella *Becoming Abigail* illustrate how postcolonial African women are exploited by London's shadow economies. Nazer describes how she is transported from Sudan to the former

metropole to continue her life of domestic servitude. Likewise, Abani's protagonist, Abigail, is taken from Nigeria to become a prostitute for British men. Despite escaping their captors, the state's anti-trafficking laws and organizations continue to oppress these women by denying them citizenship, asylum, or proper care. This chapter subsequently illuminates a different facet of the globalized market to show how postcolonial bodies have become readily available – and disposable - for customers in Britain. Achille Membe's perspective on biopolitics helps expose this situation by identifying how the state and the modern slave trade create a necropolitical limbo for undocumented women. However, although Britain denies Mende and Abigail their freedom or human rights, each character locates a form of agency that releases them from the city's inhuman underground economy. Written with Western sympathizers, Nazer's text "speaks" against her physical and economic subjugation. But given this "intermediary," a story like Nazer's simultaneously presents questions about subaltern power and commodification. In Abani's work, Abigail commits suicide to reclaim control of her body and escape a lifetime of sexual abuse. This instance demonstrates how postcolonial women can use subversive forms of resistance to negate the state's necropolitical power. Ultimately, both women find ways to liberate themselves from the economic subjugation the Global North imposes on developing nations such as Sudan and Nigeria.

Consuming the Other's final chapter examines how both British petroleum companies and the Nigerian government use terrorism to overtake land and oil deposits from people in the Niger Delta. Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* illustrates how the postcolonial state uses private armies to displace native populations and allow British

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employees to seize the nation's valuable resource. Likewise, in Christie Watson's *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away,* British employees live in affluent areas of the Delta while natives are forced to survive in militia-occupied, polluted settlements. Local insurgents turn to terrorism – specifically kidnapping - as way to subvert how their community and land is oppressed by foreign economic interests. Rebels in Habila's text ransom an engineer's wife to raise money for communities impoverished by British companies. Nigerian boys arm themselves against foreign occupiers to regain possession of oil deposits in Watson's narrative. Both sets of rebels ultimately shift the hazards of economic destruction onto British bodies to reverse the flow of oil and profits back into the hands of the local people. This study questions not only how terrorism is defined in the contemporary world, but also how postcolonial nation-states impose terror upon their citizens and non-human inhabitants. The West's demand for oil drives the environmental and economic destruction of Nigeria's wetlands. Subsequently, the critique of consumer practices and the ethics behind terrorism are investigated alongside the issue of postcolonial sovereignty in a globalized setting.

The project closes by considering what emerging avenues of oppression are sustaining the work of consumer colonization. Much like the cultural products featured in the body chapters, pop-ballads and destination weddings are examined to suggest where postcolonial resistance can be implemented. Taylor Swift's "Wildest Dreams" (2015) music video displays how colonial nostalgia is a commodity that is sought after not only by the American-pop singer, but also by Western consumers. Particularly, white, First World couples have planned and purchased "colonial-Africa" themed weddings in South

Africa. Tourism, both geographic and temporal, are subsequently interrogated in the closing segment to understand how the colonial past is being repackaged and sold to contemporary Western populations.

Studying consumerism through a postcolonial lens broadens how subjectivity and agency are understood in a time of rapid globalization that spreads neoliberal economic practices into the Global South. Like Banksy's depiction of the young Indian sweatshop worker, *Consuming the Other* identifies some powerful corporations or industries that use exploitive labor practices and unsustainable resource extraction methods throughout the postcolonial world. In doing so, this project raises a number of questions that can be explored in both the academic and public sphere. How is power exercised by our everyday purchases? What "unseen" populations – both human and non-human – are harmed by the companies or economies we support? How is cultural appropriation undermining the cultural objects and practices of minority communities? Does the commodification of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism simply make the world the same? Because commodities can be approached from different critical perspectives, such as street-art or academic discourse, the following chapters investigate how postcolonial writers and subcultures are engaging with "Empire." Fashion, economic spaces, modern slave narratives, and terrorist practices reveal how both oppression and resistance. These clashes with neocolonial forces invite us to reconsider the limits of their past strategies and imagine new, globalized approaches to the issues affecting the postcolonial world.

Chapter One

The Empire's New Clothes: The Consumption and Use of Dress in Anand's *Untouchable* and the Congolese Sapeurs

To change your masters, change your clothes.
-   Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh*

In 2014, Guinness premiered a commercial in the United Kingdom that depicted

daily life in an impoverished neighborhood in Brazzaville, Congo. From sugarcane

farmers to metalworkers, the advertisement featured different Congolese men toiling in

destitute conditions. These scenes gradually shifted to show a few of these workers

shedding their dirty uniforms and begin dressing in a range of colorful suits. Adorned

with elaborate cufflinks, bow ties and canes each man wondrously transforms from a drab

manual worker into a modern-day dandy. The men are then shown parading through the

city while presenting their outfits and designer labels to the community. A voiceover at

the end of commercial reveals the identity of the group: "We are the Sapeurs. The society

of elegant persons of the Congo. You see my friends, with every grace, with every

cufflink. We say I am the master of my fate. I am the Captain of my soul."

Fig 2. Sapeur Transformation from Guinness, "Sapeurs," *Guinness.com,* 18 March 2014.

By appearing in the Guinness commercial, the Sapeurs' unique postcolonial style of dress is presented to a global audience. Wearing European clothing and vintage colonial uniforms in flashy color palettes signals an appropriation and remixing of the former masters' dress. Rather than exhibiting themselves as victims of the colonial system, *La Sape* (the Society of Ambiancers and Persons of Elegance) specifically wears such fetishized dress to assume a range of identities that play with the authority of European soldiers, aristocrats, and dandies. This distinct form of sartorial representation has consequently caught the attention of Westerners who curiously consume and market the Sapeurs as both "exotic" cultural products and positive, liberated images of contemporary Africa. Accordingly, prior to their appearance in Guinness' "Made of More" campaign, the Congolese dandies have been featured in Italian photographer Daniele Tamagni's 2009 fashion photobook *Gentleman of Bacongo.*[8] Tamagni's publication – which has been translated into numerous languages – provides a vast photographic study of the Sapeurs' dress code that defines the look and comportment of the subculture. More recently, in 2012, the Sapeurs starred in American recording-artist Solange Knowles' music video *Losing You*. The fashionable group is shown strutting through the streets of Cape Town, South Africa proudly displaying outfits and accessories that bear the British Union Jack. These three different products take up *Sapeologie* and carefully disseminate facets of the subculture's ethos and image to

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[8] The Sapeurs have most recently been featured in Tamagni's 2015 publication *Fashion Tribes: Global Street Style.*

different locations in the West.[9] Some of these places, like Paris, London, and Brussels,

are incidentally former colonial metropoles that are home to growing Sapeur diasporas.

While scholars have celebrated how the group reclaims agency through their subversive

dress, none have questioned how the commodification and consumption of the Sapeurs

affect the politics and positioning of the subculture. Therefore, this chapter interrogates

the financial and cultural transactions tied to these products to better understand how, if

at all, the Sapeurs can profit from or manage their identities in a global marketplace.

Intertwined in this inquiry is the role of Western consumers and how this audience

receives and "purchases" the Sapeurs as postcolonial cultural products. Exploring this

relationship between the Sapeurs and the global market begins a new conversation about

how formerly colonized groups can use consumerism to attain agency or financial profit.

The Sapeurs' complex relationship with consumerism and dress is not a recent

development of the postcolonial era. The onset of colonialism brought with it the

imposition of European culture represented, in part, through dress. Throughout the

colonies, the uniforms, garments, and accessories worn by Europeans signified the

supremacy and identity of imperial nations. The symbolic power of the colonizer's dress,

therefore, gained popularity amongst subjugated groups looking to emulate their masters.

Correspondingly, in his 1935 novel *Untouchable*, Mulk Raj Anand makes legible the

tension between colonial dress and identity through the protagonist's rejection of Indian

attire in favor of English clothing. By purchasing pieces of a colonial uniform, Bakha

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[9] While there are various facets and fluid definitions of *Sapeologie*, I refer here to the
subculture's devotion to elegance and dress to redefine identity and power.

attempts to acquire an English identity that will endow him with the superiority of his oppressors. Unfortunately, Bakha continues to be deemed inferior by both the English and his Indian peers regardless of his ability to dress as a colonizer. Anand's work demonstrates how sartorial mimicry does not assist subjugated groups in gaining the identity of the master, but rather these communities become further suppressed by adhering to the ideals and economic demands of their colonizers' culture. Agency, however, is accessible to Bakha and his fellow Indians by reconfiguring their relationship with consumerism and dress. As detailed in *Untouchable*, Mahatma Gandhi's *Swadeshi* strategy called upon colonial India to boycott the purchase of English clothing in hopes of resurrecting its economy and national identity by promoting the manufacture of homespun cloth. Because they are separated by time, geography, and empire, it may seem, on the one hand, unconventional to compare Anand's work with the recent depictions of the Sapeurs, however, pairing these "texts" presents a shared narration about consumerism, identity, and dress that can provide strategies for navigating global markets that seek to absorb and profit from colonized cultures. In doing so, this study questions whether anti-colonial strategies from the past can be applied to the postcolonial present to combat the evolving form of empire.

Cut from the Same Cloth: Dress, Clothing, and Colonization

It is important first to identify and classify how clothing is connected to a larger cultural and social order before focusing on its relationship to colonization. Dress is an encompassing system that includes a wide range of materials or practices that modify and

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supplement the body. A group's form of dress is unique in the way its members choose to alter the appearance, smell, touch, taste, and sound of their bodies. Through this process of distinction, members of a community use their bodies as vessels to represent a unified identity that indicates a shared cultural background, heritage, or nationality. Joanne B. Eicher further argues that these sensory systems are

> non-verbal communication that aids human interaction in space and time. The codes of dress include visual as well as other sensory modifications and supplements which set off either or both cognitive and affective processes that result in recognition or lack or lack of recognition by the viewer. (1)

Dress therefore not only indicates the differences between groups but also complicates the politics of social relationships. The representative nature of clothing subsequently promotes the identity of a group as a hospitable or threatening essence by outsiders.

In respect to colonization, different empires rationalized the domination of foreign populations since these communities' clothing did not correspond to European codes of dress. While there remain crucial differences between colonial projects, scholars have found concerns with clothing, appearance, and the body to be central to the way colonizers justify and facilitate subjugation. Mariselle Melendez notes that Europeans defended the colonization of Native Americans and African slaves due to their lack of clothing (18). In this situation, the absence of dress on a non-European body represented a "savagery" that invited colonial intervention. Integrating the use of European clothing helped vindicate the oppression created by empire since it helped "civilize" lesser covered peoples. In Emma Tarlo's study, she notes that the English "felt it their duty to civilize barbaric natives [Indians] and rescue them from their own primitiveness" (39) by imposing the use of clothing like Manchester *saris.* However, the colonizers carefully

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limited the extent to which they "civilized" Indians with clothing so masters' could retain their supposed superiority. In a different scenario, Timothy Burke acknowledges that Christian missionaries in colonial Africa enforced the wearing of clothing to edify the cultural standards of the natives (194). The elimination of African customs consequently allowed Europeans to dismantle the cultures that unified and defined native groups. These studies similarly demonstrate how European powers worked towards eradicating or manipulating dress systems to dominate colonized people.

To justify the domination of foreign groups, European colonizers rationalized that their forms of dress exemplified a level of superiority that granted them power over "lesser" populations. European clothing and accoutrements helped build what would be recognized as the master's identity. The foreign nature of European dress attracted the attention of the colonized and drove some natives to adopt new clothes or adapt their traditional garments to the colonizers' standards. For example, as will be explained further in the chapter, different sets of Indian men embraced English dress or mixed their wardrobe with foreign articles (Tarlo 47). Likewise, men in the Congo area added European clothing to their native dress during the earliest contact between the two populations (Gondola 26). These instances exemplify how native groups took to or remixed foreign clothing they found to be alluring or different. It is important to note, however, that there is not one singular and receptive perspective upon European dress shared by either Indian or Congolese people. Rather, attitudes towards European dress were heavily mixed and dependent upon factors such as class or gender.

Borrowing foreign dress and emulating European identity troubled the hierarchy of empire. Instead of retaining the clothing or customs of the "savage," colonized people adopted their masters' dress and bodily etiquette and ultimately challenged the categorizations created by the colonial system. Within postcolonial thought, imitating the colonizer's identity is perceived to be a strategy that subjugated groups can use to challenge the legitimacy of empire's authority. Homi K. Bhabha specifically defines this process as mimicry whereby colonized subjects duplicate the actions and appearance of the colonizer to dispel the notion that power is limited only to the exalted masters. Initially, colonizers attempt to change foreign people to the point where they become a "reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 122). Dominated groups learn their masters' language and values yet continue to be seen as dissimilar due to their "inherent" savagery or foreignness. Bhabha notes that this scenario ultimately creates a state of ambivalence that reveals that the colonized cannot both assume the masters' identity yet remain different (123). The oppressed can overcome this incongruity by acknowledging that their imitative nature is able to disrupt the legitimacy and power of the colonizer.

This process of emulation centers around the colonized body and its ability to copy the values and language of the colonizer. While Bhabha does not specifically identify dress as being part of the master's values, I assert that the use of clothing and accessories help shape the colonizer's ethics. Notions of cleanliness, civility, and superiority are sewn into dress and therefore represent European principles. Consequently, to successfully replicate the colonizer's image, the oppressed must adhere

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to a foreign system of dress that denotes empire's identity. Clothing is essential in this situation since it allows the colonized body to wear the symbolic garments that create the image of the dominant community. Beyond appearance, clothing is also vital to mimicry since it ultimately helps the colonized body execute what Bhabha identifies as the "social articulation of difference" (3). In this sense, clothing needs to be suited to the physical body so that it can perform the role of a distinctive identity. Since clothing dictates the mobility of the body through specific physical limitations and liberties, the colonized must experience these same realities of restraint or freedom if they are to successfully mimic the colonizer's identity. Through this imitative process, subjugated bodies can replicate the powerful roles of the colonizer and dispel the notion that authority is inherent or restricted to a certain community.

Bhabha's emphasis on the performative nature of mimicry closely relates to Judith Butler's perspective on gender as a "repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort, of being" (*Gender* 33). From Butler's standpoint, gender roles and their rigid performances are imposed by a larger ruling system that seeks to keep heterosexism and phallocentrism in power. Like colonization, gender norms are established by a ruling class that presents its superiority as a naturally occurring hierarchy that it imposes on marginalized groups. Bodies are therefore produced in an enclosed matrix that prescribes each genders' sanctioned actions and appearances. These allotted roles create a larger social structure that rewards gender conformity and oppresses any alternative or subversive performances. To challenge this

system, Butler contends that a parodic repetition of gender can help dispel the notion that privileged and naturalized gender roles exist (*Gender* 146). The practice of drag specifically does the type of parody that reveals the performative and structured characteristics of gender. Through imitative measures that include the use of dress, drag plays with the "distinctions of the anatomy the performer and the gender that is being performed" (Butler, *Gender* 137). It is essential to note that Butler's strategy focuses heavily on gender and vaguely engages with race and if it can be performed and troubled. While Butler does assert that the process of racialization exists and comes to define bodies, she only briefly mentions that dominant gender and racial categories intersect to propagate oppression (*Bodies* 18 – 19). Additionally, this discussion fails to consider that the identificatory elements of race cannot be detached and replaced to other bodies like when performing drag. These blindspots in Butler's work have previously been discussed by Sara Salih who recognizes the limits of performativity as it applies to race. [10] However, despite this gap, I – like Salih – consider Butler's scholarship helpful in exposing how certain practices or ideas construct the identity of a body. While performance can indeed reveal the artificial nature of power, it still lacks the ability to dislodge structures from their dominant positions. Moreover, imitative practices do not allow oppressed communities to enter spaces of power since membership into these positions is guarded by regulatory systems that disallow marginalized bodies from entering such areas. Despite these restrictions, Butler's take on performance and mimicry

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[10] See "On Judith Butler and Performativty" in *Sexualities & Communication in Everyday Life: A Reader* to review Salih's full critique of performativity.

help us understand how identities and positions are created by repeated actions and mannerisms.

In respect to *Untouchable*, Anand's work helps indicate how imitative practices such as mimicry are limited in their capabilities to subvert oppression. While Bakha is indeed able to dress and act like the colonizer, he is still unable to lessen or eradicate the oppression caused by colonization. Instead, Bakha's mimicry of the English helps bolster the dominance attributed to the colonizers while weakening India's power and culture. Location is key in this negotiation of power as Bakha's body is forced to abide by the master's set of rules and identities. Drawing attention to this failure of mimicry in *Untouchable* reveals how oppressed groups can leverage this instance and use their consumer roles to challenge colonial dominance. Accordingly, the Sapeurs also find themselves in a similar situation where they must navigate dress, consumption, and mimicry within the spatial confines of postcolonial Congo. Rather than simply copying European style or wearing colonial clothing, the Sapeurs appropriate their masters' dress and foreign garments to create identities that signify liberation and resistance to oppressive positioning. This form of subversion is being challenged however by its commodification and commercialization by the West. The Sapeurs' unique dress has attracted the attentions of various companies that use the group to sell other products, such as beer or music. Such a situation demands interrogation since forms of postcolonial resistance are becoming neutralized by industries that commodify and popularize peripheral culture. While separated by time and location, both colonized Indians and postcolonial Sapeurs consider how they consume and use clothing to resist oppression.

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Frantz Fanon identifies that clothing can be used as an anti-colonial tool in

"Algeria Unveiled*"* by stating "the way people clothe themselves, together with the

traditions of dress and finery that custom implies, constitutes the most distinctive form of

a society's uniqueness, that is to say the one that is most immediately perceptible" (35).

Fanon thus recognizes that clothing is a symbolic and powerful cultural element that

denotes a group's unique identity. Therefore, within a colonial system, it is important for

peripheral groups to maintain the use, production, and consumption of such clothing

since it directly opposes the colonizer's standards of identity and dress. To illustrate how

this strategy challenges colonization, Fanon focuses on the way Algerian women wear

different veils to represent their religious identity and how this practice conflicts with the

type of dress imposed by the French colonizer. In this scenario, choosing to use the veil is

an act of sovereignty which denies the imperial power from controlling the Algerian body

and how it is represented. While Fanon does not mention how this strategy is directly tied

to economics, I add here that wearing the veil is also a consumer choice where

investment goes into the production or purchase of the item. The groups of women that

refused to wear more revealing European-style clothing therefore helped build a

collective resistance against their masters. Instead of becoming "test-women" with "bare

faces and free bodies" ("Algeria" 167), Algerian women chose to purchase and wear their

traditional dress. Such actions directly fought against domination since the French

believed that prohibiting the veil's use would help diminish Algerian unity and colonial

resistance ("Algeria" 163). To disguise their attack on Algerian identity, the French

insisted that their plan to end the use of veils was a benevolent campaign to liberate

women from a repressive male-dominated nation that supported "medieval and barbaric" practices ("Algeria" 164). Instead of following this rhetoric, however, Algerian women sided with their culture and continued using the veil. Fanon uses this historical instance to argue that colonized groups must maintain an "attitude of counter assimilation, of maintenance of cultural, hence national, originality" ("Algeria" 42) to retain the means for liberation. Through this process, subjugated groups can use their clothing as a weapon that represents and enacts rebellion against colonial or dominant forces. Fanon's perspectives on clothing therefore advocates that cultural resistance is a more effective strategy for defeating colonialism than simply complying with the master's stipulations.

Intertwined in Fanon's discussion of clothing and resistance is the strategy of political consumerism. In this sense, refusing to wear or purchase a certain form of dress allows consumers to take collective action against a larger system of power. Michele Micheletti explains that groups that use this approach make buying choices

> based on attitudes and values regarding issues of justice, fairness, or noneconomic issues that concern personal and family well-being and ethical or political assessment of favorable and unfavorable business and government practice (2).

Therefore, when Algerian women reject the use of French dress, they are consciously contesting the political and cultural signifiers of empire. Refraining from buying and using certain colonial products has previously been used by other dominated groups. As I will later detail in depth, Mahatma Gandhi drove colonial India to boycott the purchase of English cloth and dress with the *Swadeshi* movement. This form of negative political consumerism helped India diminish its economic contributions to the British Empire and

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ultimately band the colonized masses against the foreign masters.[11] In both instances,

clothing was boycotted by colonial populations to undermine the authority and

supremacy of European powers. By choosing a form of dress, disempowered groups can

find agency through mimicry and consumer choices.

Consumerism, Clothes, and National Identity in Anand's Untouchable

In Mulk Raj Anand's 1935 novel, *Untouchable*, the main character Bakha

struggles to find agency within his disempowered position as a latrine cleaner. Bakha

exists on the periphery of Indian society where other untouchables serve the sanitary

needs of the upper castes. Due to his social position and occupation, Bakha is continually

stigmatized and mistreated by other Indians. This lowly existence is further exacerbated

by colonization which also makes Bakha a subordinate to the English. Being oppressed

by these two groups drives the character to seek a strategy that will transform his

wretched standing. Accordingly, Bakha is drawn to foreign clothing that signifies the

power associated with English identity. By purchasing and wearing parts of imperial

dress, Bakha attempts to divorce himself from his demoralized position and national

heritage. However, regardless of his ability to imitate the colonizers' dress, Bakha

continues to be perceived as an insignificant lower-caste member by both the English and

Indians alike. Although overlooked by past scholarship, this moment in Anand's text

provides a crucial description of how the colonizer's system of dress helps facilitate

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[11] Negative political consumerism, or boycotting, is the act of refusing to buy certain
products for political or cultural reasons.

subjugation. Subsequently, I focus here on Bakha's attraction to English dress and identity to argue that sartorial mimicry does not help empower the colonized, but rather this form of emulation threatens to disempower further native groups who abandon their national identity and clothing. Based on this scenario, I focus on the power of Bakha's Indian clothing and identity to contend that *Untouchable* illustrates how dress and consumer practices can be used as an anti-colonial practice that challenges the structures of empire.

Prior to the Raj, interactions between Indian and English men established economic ties that would foster trade. One particular way these relationships were strengthened was through English assimilation into Indian society. Accordingly, the use of foreign dress became one way Englishmen demonstrated their absorption of the Indian lifestyle. English perspective on such clothing is important to understand since it became more critical as the Europeans began to take control of India as a colony. Emma Tarlo's historical study of Indian clothing recognizes that early English travelers to the area "favored loose stitched garments of cotton and silk to which they sometimes added European touches such as buttons and shoes" (36). In particular, clothing that was sewn together was openly worn by English men since these articles belonged to the Indian elite and denoted superiority. From a very early point, the English carefully chose what clothing they would wear to represent themselves as a powerful force. Only minor changes were made to the stitched Indian clothing to suit either an aesthetic or practical need. Any form of draped clothing, however, was rejected by the English since this style was associated with the "barbaric" lower-class citizens. Loincloths such as the *langoti*

that was wrapped and tucked to fit the body was looked upon with strong disdain since it revealed a majority of an Indian's dark skin (Tarlo 33-34). The careful adoption of foreign clothing subsequently helped solidify the bonds between the English and higher-class Indians. Although initially they were eager to wear Indian clothing, the English would gradually adopt a different view on cultural assimilation as colonization continued to develop.

Increased contact with the English led small groups of Indian men to adopt foreign clothing as well. Western forms of dress often conflicted with caste and religious classifications and therefore the use of such clothing was rare at first. Mostly upper-class Indian men sought out foreign dress while rural populations and women kept to their customary clothing (Tarlo 24). Dressing like the English not only challenged social or religious systems, but also defied what was considered respectable Indian behavior (Tarlo 24). Accordingly, using English clothing required a different etiquette that often clashed with dominant notions of social decency. Men that chose to wear English dress, therefore, independently decided to copy their masters and shed bits of their culture (Tarlo 24). Wearing English shoes and hats specifically altered the way Indian men displayed their feet and head within their homes and public spaces (Cohn 135). Regardless of the risks associated with wearing English clothing, elite Indian men gradually began mixing their traditional outfits with foreign articles such as formal jackets and pants. Creating these hybrid forms of dress ultimately became a method by which privileged Indian men attempted to gain the values associated with the modern and civilized English (Tarlo 45). However, regardless of their ability to imitate the English, Indian men were still unable to

shed their darker complexion and nationality despite their new clothing and appearance. Embracing a foreign identity changed the way some Indians dressed yet not how they were discriminated against by white populations.

As time passed, Englishmen's receptive attitude towards foreign clothing began to wane due to the fear of becoming irreversibly tainted and weakened by Indian garments. Restrictions on wearing such clothing in public began to be imposed on employees of the East India Company as early as 1830 (Cohn 112). Measures that curbed further assimilation forecasted the inevitable partition between the English and Indians which would be brought by the advent of empire. With the abolition of the East India Company in 1858, the English completely separated themselves from the Indian population by assuming the position of *sahibs* or masters of the colony. Various pieces of the *sahib* uniform were created during colonial occupation to help the English body demonstrate its symbolic power. Items like the topee solar hat and cholera belt represented colonial ingenuity and marked the sartorial differences between the masters and subjects (Collingham 199). The uniform's connection to the *sahib* body endowed the clothing with symbolic power that Indians were disallowed from wearing unless directly outfitted to serve in the colonial military. However, even when helping the English maintain their rule, Indian soldiers were provided different outfits to separate them from their oppressors. Indian uniforms were created to reflect the colonial disparaging fantasies of "what an 'oriental' warrior should look like" (Cohn 129). English issued uniforms drastically exoticized the Indian soldier to maintain the division between the European master and "Oriental" servant. Prohibiting the colonized from dressing like their masters

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reinforced the symbolic power of the *sahib's* clothing. *Sahibs* were also distinguished

from their subordinates by the way their clothing was manufactured. The use of

machinery rather than manpower elevated English clothing to a prestigious level

throughout the world. These various measures of differentiation were used to blatantly

display the superior position held by the English. Throughout the time of the Raj, the

clothing worn by the English continued to be used as a tool that imposed colonial power

over the Indian body.

Anand's Untouchable and the Politics of Clothing

Past scholarship on *Untouchable* focuses on Anand's craft as an Indian author and

how his work compares or responds to his English contemporaries. Surjit S. Dulai argues

that Anand's novella delivers a realistic perspective on Indian life that advocates social

transformation by providing a "faithful portrayal of authentic experience and by

imaginative and aesthetic integrity, than by a bald enunciation of social theory thinly

masked in fabricated stories" (188). Likewise, Jessica Berman contends that

Untouchable's strength stems from Anand's ability to merge Indian and European

literary influences to construct a "rooted cosmopolitanism" that gives a global readership

an "understanding of the varied modes and locations of modernism" (144). Ben Conisbee

Baer makes a similar claim about *Untouchable's* international influence by asserting that

Anand's artistic experimentation with temporality follows a "desired trajectory not

homewards…but rather colony to metropolis" (576). Although these interpretations of

Anand's work place the author in discussion with English literature, these studies shy

away from analyzing the novella's portrayal of colonization and its effects on India. The scarce attention to this perspective leaves *Untouchable* insufficiently explored in the way it illustrates how the colonized can find agency against oppression. It is at this point that I concentrate my study of the work and how it specifically portrays clothing and consumerism's relationship with colonization.

Anand vividly depicts Bakha's struggle with clothing and national identity to show how foreign cultural elements such as dress can facilitate the work of colonialism. Due to his dispossessed status, Bakha is drawn to *sahib* clothing since it belongs to the "superior people" (11) of the colony who can rule over the Indian population. The boy believes that the *sahib's* authority specifically emanates from the distinctive English "fashun" (10) which is different from Indian clothing. The colonizer's uniform displays exceptional "clear-cut styles of European dress" that contrast with the modest pattern of India's "skirty costume" (10). In this regard, Bakha perceives that each set of clothing helps determine a group's national identity and their position in the colony. The subjugated character consequently attempts to purchase parts of the colonizer's uniform such as topee solar hats, trousers, and boots to transform his social and cultural affiliation. The foreign ways of dress, therefore, change Bakha's perception of himself by making him believe that Indian people and clothing are inferior. The desire to transform his identity leads the protagonist to sacrifice his well-being and meager income for what he considers to be exceptional and powerful garments. Fittingly, Anand's initial description of Bakha finds the character shivering from the cold wind that breaks through the worn fibers of his second-hand *sahib* overcoat and breeches. Regardless of the

physical pain, however, Bakha "sacrifices a good many comforts" (10) to dress like his masters. He can protect his body with other materials, yet the idea of "risking the formlessness of an Indian quilt" (12) displeases Bakha. This extreme loathing of Indian clothing causes Bakha's father to admonish his son for sacrificing his health to worship the sartorial ways of the "*gora* white men" (10). Accordingly, his obsession with English clothing is so great that the character refuses to shed the fetishized uniform, boots included, when sleeping. This act brings much shame to his family who must endure the son's devotion to the colonizer even in their domestic space. Continuing to wear boots particularly signals his attempt at not only dressing like the English but also following their sartorial customs. Unlike the *sahibs*, Indians would remove their shoes before entering a building as a sign of respect (Tarlo 44). Nonetheless, he demonstrates his commitment to embodying English identity by completely rejecting Indian customs.

Bakha's obsession with *sahib* clothing continues to grow since he believes that obtaining more pieces of the uniform will completely transform his identity. Due to his meager income, Bakha's outfit still contains pieces of Indian clothing that must be eliminated to achieve an untainted ensemble. The struggle to complete his sahib uniform consequently draws Bakha to continue his pursuit of becoming English. While passing through a local market, Bakha stares at piles of second-hand *sahib* clothes and silently "hunger(s) for the touch of them" (11). The desire for such clothing eventually becomes too much for Bakha, and he sacrifices his small allowance for another English garment. Despite Bakha's purchase of a military jacket, he continues to be called "*Pilpali sahib*" (12) or imitation *sahib* by higher-caste Indians. This disparaging moniker further belittles

the boy since his countrymen criticize him for abandoning his caste to mimic the English.

Likewise, the local colonizers also continue to see Bakha as a subordinate despite the

character's attempt at imitating their form of dress. Therefore, regardless of his ability to

imitate and buy the image of the colonizer, Bakha realizes that "except for his English

clothes there was nothing English in his life" (12). His inability to change his identity

demonstrates how the *sahib's* clothing only retains its symbolic power when worn by the

English body. Anand's *Untouchable* thus depicts the limits of mimicry since Bakha is

unable to become English regardless of his imitative actions.

Bakha's struggle to imitate the colonizer speaks to the larger battle occurring in

the colony between Indian and English national identity. Anand reveals that Bakha's

rejection of Indian heritage is not a singular event, but a nationwide issue. Just like

Bakha, clothing becomes the tool by which the younger Indian generation attempts to

mimic the style and customs of the colonizer. The desire to purchase the products that

signify the *sahib's* identity is common amongst Bakha's friends such as Chota, who

wears shorts, oils his hair, and smokes Red-Lamp cigarettes like an Englishman (10).

The extent of India's national identity crisis is further evinced in the text's disclosure that

"the consciousness of every child was full of a desire to wear European dress' (101). The

younger generation of India is not the only group that is infatuated with the colonizers'

dress. Rather there is a widespread desire to dress like the English as is exemplified by

Bakha's entire village that is infatuated by a *sahib's* solar topee that hangs in the local

barracks. Though separated from the *sahib's* body, the hat retains its symbolic power and

continues to be a "symbol of authority" (100) over the Indian community. In fact, the

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aura of the topee is so great that "people would come to see it for miles" (101). The

attraction to the hat demonstrates how the allure of English clothing can affect various

Indians who remain controlled by the metonymic image of the colonizer.

While much of Anand's work focuses on Bakha's obsession with English

clothing, *Untouchable* also illustrates how India's subjugated communities can challenge

colonization by reinvigorating the manufacture and value of their form of dress. Since

the consumer practices of the dispossessed Indian people promote the cultural and

economic worth of the colonizer's clothing, *Untouchable* demonstrates how boycotting

such products can ultimately weaken the strength of English rule. This approach echoes

the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi whose concept of *Swaraj* or Indian self-rule was

heavily dependent upon ending the manufacture and sale of the colonizer's clothing (Ishii

303).[12] By resisting compliance with the foreign textile industry, Gandhi sought to end

India's economic support and cultural devotion to the English. The Indian leader's

writings about *Swaraj* focused heavily on the rejection of foreign clothing:

> India cannot be free so long as India voluntarily encourages or tolerates the
> economic drain which has been going on for the past century and a half. A
> boycott of foreign goods means no more no less than boycott of foreign cloth.
> Foreign cloth constitutes the largest drain voluntarily permitted by us all. (*The
> Essential Writings* 271)

To help liberate India, Gandhi promoted his version of *Swadeshi* which would seek to

end the purchase of English clothing. Through this intervention, Gandhi sought to

reinvigorate India's national identity by endorsing a return to traditional homespun

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[12] The fourth chapter of this project covers a similar situation occurring in postcolonial
Nigeria. Militants in the nation's Niger Delta are using various forms of terrorism to stop
British petroleum companies from unlawfully extracting oil.

practices. Using machinery such as the spinning wheel and loom would help India to create its economic industry and self-sufficiency. The production of *khadi,* or handloom clothing, would subsequently come to replace English garments and became the emblematic clothing worn by many Indians in the anti-colonial struggle.

Not surprisingly, Gandhi's knowledge about the power of clothing stems from the leader's lifelong experiences with the politics of dress. Gandhi, like most educated Indian boys his age, followed the trend of experimenting with English clothing by wearing a shirt and coat with his traditional *dhoti* (Tarlo 65). These initial experiences with foreign dress would eventually become more common once Gandhi began his journey to London for law studies. Before his arrival to England in 1888, the young Indian made sure to rid himself of his traditional clothing to prevent any embarrassment abroad. While in the metropole Gandhi worked especially hard at "the impossible task of becoming an English gentleman" (*An Autobiography* 98) by adhering to the local standards of dress and etiquette. The use of English clothing became Gandhi's way of helping to conceal his Indian nationality (*An Autobiography* 93). Gandhi's perception of Indian clothing and its political power would become apparent during his time as a barrister in Durban, South Africa. Despite his education and profession, he was often disparagingly called "coolie barrister" in the courthouse (*An Autobiography* 178). When asked to remove his turban by a magistrate, Gandhi refused such an insulting command since "wearing the turban had great importance in this state of things" (*An Autobiography* 178). The aftermath of this incident ultimately leads Gandhi to reject what the English perceived to be appropriate dress. On his return to India in 1915, Gandhi resumed wearing his *dhoti* and

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would eventually choose the loincloth to be his symbolic uniform that represented the *Swadeshi* movement. The various moments of ridicule Gandhi suffered due to his Indian identity and clothing taught him how the power of dress could be used to challenge English authority.

Accordingly, Gandhi's appearance at the end of *Untouchable* drastically changes the way Bakha perceives *sahib* clothing. The leader's arrival in the small village brings together various Indian communities who are eager to hear Gandhi's message. This tumultuous scene alters Bakha's notion of power since a fellow Indian wrapped in a shawl can be so commanding. Gandhi's presence in the village is juxtaposed by a military officer who is dressed head to toe in *sahib* clothing. At first, Bakha admires the Englishman for his formidable uniform yet Gandhi's "milk-white blanket" (143) changes this situation by overtaking the untouchable character's attention. The various devotees that scramble to kneel in front of Gandhi show Bakha the incredible power that resides in Indian identity and culture. Gandhi's ability to challenge English dominance is further demonstrated by the leader's ability to motivate the Indian crowd to renounce the purchase and use of foreign clothing. After a short speech that denounces the inequality of the caste system, the assembly begins to chant "Let's discard foreign cloth. Let's burn it!" (150). The collective destruction of English clothing teaches Bakha how to end his devotion to the products and ideology that support colonial rule. Although Bakha reacts to Gandhi in problematic ways, seeing the group's revolutionary actions leads him to lose his desire to become a *sahib*. This change in Bakha's demeanor consequently signals how the character reclaims his Indian identity and culture to resist the control of the English.

Rejecting the symbols of colonial rule becomes his way of reinvigorating his heritage and fighting against empire's cultural and economic oppression.

Origins and Codes of La Sape

As in colonial India, subjugated Congolese people also used clothing to challenge the power of both the French and Belgian Empire. While the Sapeurs specifically use this strategy in their own way, the origins of their sartorial resistance can be traced back to some of the earliest interactions between Africans and Europeans in the area.[13] [14] Using clothing to establish autonomy and independent identities is not a practice that was created with the advent of European contact. Rather, as Phyllis Martin asserts in her historical analysis of Brazzaville, "the presentation of self in outward displays was an important aspect of pre-colonial society" (3). French and Belgian occupation of the area in the late 1800s did, however, change the way Congolese bodies were allowed to be dressed. These two sets of European colonizers attempted to control their African subjects by restricting or prescribing certain types of dress. This strategy was implemented to help create the identities and positions of the colonized and colonizer in

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[13] Various scholars have different opinions as to where and when the Sapeurs' style originated. In this chapter, I provide a few perspectives on the matter to give a well-rounded history of the subculture. To read further into the disputed origins of the Sapeurs, please see Dominic Thomas' article "La Sape: Fashion and Performance" in *The Routledge Companion to Global Popular Culture* (2015).

[14] While Portuguese explorers made contact with people of the Congo area during the 1400s, I focus here on the post-Berlin Conference era (1884-1885) where France and Belgium sought to control the region for its resources. This competitive colonial environment helped birth the hybrid sartorial culture of the Sapeurs.

both sections of Congo. Nevertheless, subjugated groups rebelled against these impositions by appropriating European clothing and refusing to assume the uniform of the colonized "Other" (Thomas 502). Historian Didier Gondola, via Gaston Boutellier, asserts that "houseboys were the first, around 1910, to begin to imitate their European masters. This form of mimicry was likely encouraged because properly dressed servants who were capable of responding in correct French were a reflection upon their masters' social refinement" (26). These "civilized" houseboys not only increased their masters' prestige but also their own since they were able to dress like Europeans. In the 1930s, Congolese's relationship with European dress shifted as the servants went from wearing their masters' second-hand outfits to becoming active consumers of the latest European trends. This movement was propelled by the arrival of West African colonial employees called *popo* or coastmen who wore the latest fashion from the "white man's city" (Gondola 27). In both colonial capitals, Kinshasa and Brazzaville, Congolese men began to purchase extravagant European clothing and form social clubs that revolved around the attraction to foreign fashion and dress. This gradual development of consumer culture helped the dandies form a unique identity that Congolese outsiders called *mindele ndombi* or "whites with black skin" (Gondola 27). The predecessors of the Sapeurs, therefore, laid the groundwork for creating a counter-hegemonic subculture that existed between the periphery of colonized and colonizer.

After both Congolese colonies gained independence from European control in 1960, the Sapeur subculture began to take shape in postcolonial Brazzaville and later into

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Kinshasa. Scholars Janet MacGaffey and Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga identify disaffected, unemployed youth as the initiators of *La Sape* movement:

> They competed for status by acquiring French designer clothing and wearing it as part of an ostentatious lifestyle. This movement brought young people into trade in the 1970s, as they sought the means to go to Paris and buy expensive clothing that identifies them…Through their trade and other activities, the traders protest and struggle against exclusion. (3)

Consumerism became a process by which Congolese youths gradually defined their identities and positions in postcolonial nations. It is important to recognize that purchasing and wearing European clothing is not the only practice that defines who can be a Sapeur. In fact, there is a lengthy – and at times lethal – initiation process that must be followed to become fully inducted into the group. Young Congolese males begin their journey into *La Sape* by traveling to former colonial metropoles such as Paris, Brussels, or London to purchase high-end clothing. Often the migrants are very impoverished, unemployed youths who sacrifice their meager savings to find illicit avenues into these cities. It is not uncommon for a traveler to attempt various trips to reach the coveted metropolis due to the heavy policing of international borders and smuggling routes. Regardless of the danger, however, young travelers are drawn to places like Paris since it "continues to occupy the mythic status it was invested with when it stood at the centrifugal point of France's colonial empire" (Thomas 951). The neophyte participates in subversive acts against the former colonial state as part of his time in the city. Hopping metro turnstiles for free rides, hacking international phone booths, and squatting in empty apartments are all part of collecting "colonial debt." Since the former Empire denies Congolese men economic opportunities or political exile status, they in turn undermine

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the state's laws. Accordingly, Gondola points out that would-be Sapeurs "understand colonization as a historical process whose form and location have changed, but whose essence remains the same. Sons of the colonized, they too are colonized" (35).

By accumulating the appropriate *griffes*, or designer labels such as Giorgio Armani, J. M. Weston, and Yves Saint Laurent, the young traveler finally accumulates the clothing that will complete his transformation. Upon return to Congo, the journey is finished, and the newly initiated Sapeur belongs to the exclusive sartorial society. A member's comportment must continually match with the sophisticated clothing he wears. As Michela Wrong points out, Sapeurs pride themselves on "cleanliness, preach[ing] against violence, abhor[ring] hard drugs" (25). These social guidelines reveal that being a part of *La Sape* comes with a complex system of conduct. Advancement in the subculture is gained by continually collecting clothing and by competing in local fashion shows. Different groups of Sapeurs meet in social clubs and bars to show-off their *griffes* and dance to win "Grand" status. Locals applaud and help judge which Sapeur presents their clothing and dance moves the best (Thomas 505). This social practice directly relates to Butler's discussion about performance and identity. By putting on these sartorial demonstrations, the Sapeurs destabilize the idea that dandies, colonial soldiers, or aristocrats can only exist in a certain time, space, class, or body.

Consuming the Postcolonial Consumer

Past scholarship on the Sapeurs celebrates the group's use of clothing that challenges the hierarchies and identities created by colonialism. In his most recent article

on the subculture, Dominic Thomas details the wide-ranging effects that the Sapeur style

has in the postcolonial world:

> La Sape thus engages discursively and semiotically with dominant, hegemonic
> norm and standards, thereby inaugurating the space for a counter-hegemonic
> semiology, useful in recontextualizing as a way of deciphering various codes as
> they pertain to the colonial and postcolonial context, urban elites, diasporic
> populations and minority populations. (502)

Similarly, Didier Gondola lauds the group for creating a subversive system of dress that

is "directed toward the West, the former colonizer, as well as toward the authoritative

structures of the African state" (23). While much attention has been paid to how the

group uses clothing and consumerism to attain agency, little focus has been put upon how

La Sape is quickly becoming commodified by the West and sold in a globalized

marketplace. Recent commercials and texts that sell the group's image trouble the way in

which the Sapeurs are able to control how they are perceived and sold to foreign areas.

Moreover, the process of transforming the Congolese dandies into products somewhat

neutralizes the rebellious style and comportment of the community. Issues such as these

have somewhat been discussed on a broader scale by Graham Huggan and his concept of

the "postcolonial exotic" or what he defines as "the global commodification of cultural

difference" (vii). Huggan primarily focuses on how the field of postcolonial studies has

become commodified by academia and publishing houses to produce literature or

scholarship that profits from a desired "exotic" aesthetic that is packaged for Western

audiences. Specifically, an object's "postcoloniality" endows it with a "value [that]

pertains to a symbolic, as well as material exchange, in which even the languages of

resistance may be manipulated and consumed" (Huggan 6). Possessing this unique value

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puts postcolonial cultural products such as books, authors, films, or dress in precarious positions since they can easily be appropriated and sold by a global market that preys upon otherness.[15] I borrow Huggan's description of the postcolonial exotic and postcoloniality and apply it to my critique of the Sapeurs' recent commodification by different industries and corporations. In doing so, I question if the Sapeurs can use the resistance strategies depicted in *Untouchable* to challenge how they are commodified in commercials, fashion books, and a music video. I also examine to what extent the Congolese dandies control how they are portrayed and how these appearances are consumed by Western audiences. By exploring these issues, I not only offer a new way of analyzing the subculture, but I move towards opening a larger discourse about the power and politics of postcolonial culture in the contemporary globalized marketplace.

In 2009, a photo book titled *Gentlemen of Bacongo* captured the sartorial essence of the Sapeurs in Brazzaville. The various snapshots by Italian photographer Daniele Tamagni display how the Congolese dandies' outfits strongly contrast with their impoverished surroundings. These photos amplified the "exotic" or "unexpected" style of *La Sape* for Western audiences who traditionally are fed more stereotypical images of civil war or destitution in African nations. The allure of the Sapeurs is so great in fact that Tamagni is one of the several photographers who has traveled to Congo to photograph the subculture.[16] What distinguishes *Gentlemen of Bacongo* from other representations of

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[15] Chapter three also investigates the value of postcoloniality by addressing the contemporary popularity of modern slave narratives by subaltern women.
[16] To date, three other photographers have documented the Sapeurs style in different mediums. Francesco Giusti published a photobook *SAPE* in 2009, Baudouin Mouanda

the group is that each section of the book profiles a different Sapeur and their outfits to emphasize how each member distinctly expresses their devotion to *sapeologie*. While the publication provides the perspectives of the Congolese dandies, the text opens with a preface by the famous British fashion designer Paul Smith:

> For me the look of the Sapeurs is just amazing: it is incredible enough today to see men dressed so elegantly in capital cities like Paris or London, let alone in the Congo. Their attention to detail, their use of color, all set against the environment they live in, is just fantastic…To see the Sapeurs amazing elegance and style in contrast to the backdrop of their unexpected living conditions is truly inspirational. (Tamagni)

The subculture must have had an immense impact on Smith since his Spring 2010 collection mimics some of the outfits and pattern schemes featured in Tamagni's book. This form of appropriation directly benefits Smith reputation and economic status while in some sense depoliticizing *La Sape*'s postcolonial style. Smith provides one Western

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displayed a photo exhibit in 2011, and Héctor Madiavilla Sabaté directed Guinness' 2014 "Made of More" commercial.

Fig. 3 From the Congo to the Catwalk from: Daniele Tamagni, *Gentlemen of Bacongo*, Trolley Books, 2009.

perspective on the Sapeurs' dress and how it both compares and contrasts to European fashion or society. By juxtaposing the cultures of Paris and London to Congo, Smith's preface somewhat describes the African dandies as "exotic" sartorial anomalies. Wrapped in this vision is the notion that the Sapeurs provide some sort of relief or improvement to their countries' social or economic standing. This idea is shared by other Western institutions such as *The Guardian* and by *T: The New York Times Style Magazine* which both reviewed Tamagni's book in 2009. A short article about the publication is titled "Heart of Brightness" by *The Guardian* and the American style magazine lauds the Sapeurs since their "elegance and pride bring a nice dose of optimism to the region." While the subculture does indeed take pride in overcoming the hardships caused by colonization and war, Westerners might wrongfully see the Tamagni's depictions of the Sapeurs as evidence that "civility" is reaching sections of Congo.

 Gentlemen of Bacongo offers outsiders a glimpse into the lives of the Sapeurs, yet the brief profiles and details about the group's history provide a fuller description. Salvador Hasan, a thirty-year-old Sapeur featured in the book, describes that "beyond the appearance and vanity of smart, expensive clothing there is the moral nobility of the individual" (Tamagni). Short quotes like these from the dandies help the reader better understand the ideology of the group. Rather than simply see the Sapeurs as conspicuous consumers, outsiders can learn the various meaningful facets of the subculture. How the

group responds to its colonial past is another aspect that is covered in the book. Tamagni spotlights a separate sect of *La Sape* called The Piccadilly Group who wear tam-o-shanters and kilts after being inspired by Prince Charles' use of the clothing. The adherents to this specific style take traditional Scottish clothing and add their personal flair to the uniform such as using a Gucci belt buckle to hold up a plaid sash.

Fig. 4 Scottish Sapeurs from: Daniele Tamagni, *Gentlemen of Bacongo*, Trolley Books, 2009.

Other photos sets echo these postcolonial styles by showing how the Sapeurs also appropriate French colonial-era clothing. One member dons a brown military uniform with French flag colored braces and a vintage *République Française* badge. These signifiers of colonial power are juxtaposed and lampooned by the Sapeur, who wears

pink sunglasses with the Eiffel Tower printed on the lenses. Both instances in the book

reveal how the Congolese dandies are claiming alternative positions outside of the

colonized and colonizer binary. Paul Goodwin, the Cross Cultural Curator of the Tate

Gallery, similarly describes these scenes as "a throwback to colonial patterns of behavior

and conditioning while at the same time signaling a particular post-colonial appropriation

of the master's style and manners and 're-mixing' them" (Tamagni). Altogether,

Tamagni's book blends photos and interviews from around the world to give a global

perspective on the Sapeur style. While the dandies are given a chance to represent

themselves by selecting their outfits and providing quotes, one can imagine that most of

the profits from publishing this work did not go back to the subculture. Rather, Western

publishing houses made a financial gain by using the Sapeurs' style as an easily

consumable sartorial commodity.

Inspired by Tamagni's book, American recording artist Solange Knowles and

director Melina Matsoukis filmed a music video in 2012 with the Congolese dandies. In

Losing You, the Sapeurs and their unique style are once again packaged and presented for

Western audiences. The focus of the video, like other productions, centers on dress and

performance yet much of the postcolonial politics that define *La Sape* are absent.

Initially, Solange wanted to record the video in Brazzaville yet due to financial

constrictions the production was moved to a township in Cape Town, South Africa. As

stated in an interview with *Fader Magazine*, Solange described her vision for *Losing You*

as:

> I didn't want to make it at all seem like we were trying to capture the Congo still,
> I just want to capture different facets of African fashion and African style and the

landscape, but I couldn't let [the initial concept] go… We don't want any fake fashion shit, we really want to capture what the vibe is. (Schnipper).

Fashion is featured at the forefront of the video, yet the shift in location separates the Sapeurs from their respective postcolonial city. While South Africa is also a postcolonial setting, *La Sape*'s origins specifically respond to the impositions and aftermath of the French and Belgian Empires. If the artist truly wanted to capture the true sartorial "vibe" of South Africa, she could have featured the area's own fashionista group the Swenkas.[17] These substitutions and decontextualizations are problematic because they can lead Western audiences to assume that the Sapeurs are a product of South Africa or, possibly more harmful, see the group as part of an imagined "Africa" that does not contain unique nations or cultures but simply homogenous forms of art or dress.

In some sense, these issues are mitigated in the video by using members of the Congolese Sapeur diaspora in South Africa. The scenes in *Losing You* present the group parading around Knowles in their outfits yet what stands out is their clothing that bears the British Union Jack. From umbrellas, ties, and waistcoats, the dandies wear and appropriate the symbol of the British Empire in a black South African township.

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[17] The Swenkas are a fashionista subculture comprised of working-class Zulu males in Johannesburg. Like the Sapeurs, this South African group also prides itself on dressing in high-end European clothing and having competitive fashion shows. See Jepp Rønde's 2004 documentary *The Swenkas* for further information.

Fig. 5 Dancing with Dandies from Solange Knowles, "Losing You," Solange
KnowlesVEVO, 1 October 2012.

The music video subsequently does contain some facets of the Sapeurs' dealings with
postcolonial identity, yet these coded messages can be easily overlooked, misunderstood,
or ignored without the proper contextualization. For instance, in various scenes, the
Sapeurs perform prototypical "British" behaviors such as playing polo or daintily
drinking tea from ornate cups. These visuals demonstrate how the dandies assume,
mimic, and subvert positions with their bodies and clothing. However, these scenes are
fleeting and mixed in with different shots of Solange singing and happily romping
through an impoverished neighborhood. More erasure also occurs in these sequences as
the lifestyle and clothing of the Sapeurs strongly juxtaposes and dominates the rare
appearances of any townships' residents. By keeping the Cape Town inhabitants out of
their own neighborhood, the consequences of colonialism are swept aside to provide a
more sanitized and consumable representation of South Africa. In this sense, Knowles'
video keeps fashion as the central signifier for audiences yet removes the complex

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political, cultural, and national elements that are tied to the Sapeurs' postcolonial clothing and identities.

The recent marriage between the Sapeurs and consumerism comes full circle in Guinness' 2014 "Made of More" advertisement campaign. Like Tamagni's book and Solange's music video, the Sapeurs and their outfits are the central focus of the beer company's commercial. Initial scenes show Congolese men arduously working different manual jobs in what is presented to the viewer as Brazzaville. Each laborer is then shown washing grime off their bodies in sinks or makeshift showers while an accented voiceover declares: "In life, you cannot always choose what you do, but you can always choose who you are." Gradually, different articles of clothing are carefully selected and put on by each Sapeur. These transformations bring us to the final scene which features members of *La Sape* performing and showing off their various accoutrements to fellow patrons who are noticeably enjoying Guinness.

Fig. 6 Sapeur Showdown from: Guinness, "The Sapeurs: A New Guinness Campaign for 2014, *Guinness.com,* 2014.

In this short production, the Sapeurs' participation in consumerism is directly correlated with the promotion of a consumer product. The advert promotes the idea that although one might not be able to choose an occupation due to social circumstances, a certain beer or outfit can help provide the signifiers necessary to attain a desired identity. Accordingly, Nadja Lossgot, one of the creatives behind the commercial, echoes this idea about consumerism by suggesting that the Sapeurs "transcend the everyday grind of their lives by wearing incredible suits" ("The Sapeurs: Behind the Lens"). The rhetoric of the commercial consequently relies upon ideas of liberal individualism that advocate that singular citizens can socially and economically progress via consumerism and compliance with capitalism. The Sapeurs featured in Guinness' advertisement are presented as individuals that overcome poverty and colonialism by solely working hard and buying the signifiers of success. Much like the Solange music video, the postcolonial implications are absent from the overall production. There is no mention of colonial fallout or subversion of hegemonic identities to relay the *La Sape*'s larger ideology. Moreover, the Sapeurs are once again decontextualized by being placed in Durban, South Africa rather than Brazzaville – the postcolonial city that helped forge the subculture's powerful style. Western audiences subsequently consume the Sapeurs in a depoliticized state that does not mention how consumerism can be used to resist the colonial past. Guinness' portrayal of the dandies dampens the groups' agency and ability to show how

their outfits are targeting the complex history and cultural impositions of colonialism.
Ultimately, Guinness pairs the Sapeurs' struggle and unique style to its beverage to sell
and profit from an innocuous form of consumer culture.

In all their commodified manifestations, the Sapeurs are limited in the way they
are represented and understood by consumers in a global marketplace.[18] The elaborate
suits and flamboyant poses are allowed to be shown, yet the principles and ideology of
the Sapeurs are cast aside for the sake of marketing purposes. The Western companies,
directors, and photographers who capture the group ultimately reinstate their positions of
power by controlling the overall product and receiving most, if not all, of the royalties.
Neoliberal ideals are also promoted through these cultural products that present the
Sapeurs as being independently successful due to their worship of capitalism. Western
companies therefore are able to spread this false narrative to developing nations and
ensnare populations of the Global South.

While *La Sape*'s influence is growing and possibly starting new diasporas in the
world, the group's popularization leaves its style vulnerable to becoming a fad or trend
that can be easily worn by the privileged populations or nations it seeks to address.
Within the global marketplace, the Sapeurs are profitable because of their postcoloniality,
yet it is this characteristic that is often muted or erased from the overall product.[19] Power
once again gets returned to the West or the old Empires since they have the economic and

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[18] Alain Mabanckou's 2013 novella, *Blue White Red,* functions as another consumer
product that represents the Sapeurs. While operating as literature, this text shows how
the Congolese subculture is commodified in another format.
[19] The value of postcoloniality is also addressed in chapter Three by analyzing the
consumer demand for contemporary slave narratives.

cultural means to regulate global capitalism and flows of goods or images. The question to explore further is how can postcolonial groups like the Sapeurs find agency or better means of empowerment through their commodification. In a world where consumer culture is ubiquitous and invading the developing world, how can disempowered communities resist or trouble the practices of the new colonial, and somewhat stateless, regimes? Perhaps creating marketing agencies or production companies can help disempowered populations take control of how they are represented. Boycotting culturally appropriated items or companies that profit from marketing postcoloniality may also be another useful strategy. These two solutions provide some preliminary designs for building new weapons to challenge the global marketplace and the contemporary emergence of economic colonization

Towards a Global Postcolonial Resistance

Anand's text and the Sapeurs' dress offer up different mediums that explore how disempowered groups use their bodies and appearance to resist further oppression. Wearing, re-mixing, or rejecting clothing all help the oppressed to defy the positions and identities imposed by colonization. Beyond the material use of dress, both communities are also confronted with the economic issues associated with the consumption of cultural products such as clothing and accoutrements. Anand offers up *Swadeshi* and negative consumerism to undermine the financial holdings of empire. However, as the connections between international corporations and postcolonial nations develop, the geographic scope and reach of oppression transforms as well. Marginal groups like the Sapeurs are

facing a much more dynamic and globalized form of subjugation that is propagated by consumerism. Industries tied to fashion, beverages, and music are commodifying *sapeologie* and sending these products to all points of the globe via supply chains or the Internet. This study's approach to the Congolese dandies' situation offers up more questions than concrete solutions due to the complexity of their issue. Contemporary postcolonial communities can certainly look to the past for resistance strategies; however, these approaches need to keep in mind the international complexities of the neocolonial system.

By interrogating how the Sapeurs are represented and sold to consumers, this chapter confronts a modern issue that is still evolving its own identity. Possible solutions are simultaneously unfolding as the field begins to investigate this neocolonial moment. Nonetheless, as mentioned before, Anand's text can serve as a springboard to consider how postcolonial communities can reinterpret older modes of resistance. Perhaps by bringing the past and present together, we can imagine new ways of challenging global capitalism. The work in this section – including the following chapters – engages with different postcolonial eras and geographic places. While time and location can be factors that separate subjugated groups, such differences can be used to create hybrid forms of colonial defiance. The implication of this approach allows us to question if boycotts – as featured in *Untouchable* – can undermine how several industries appropriate and neutralize the Sapeurs' style. Would negative consumerism have to occur only in the Congo to be effective in this situation? Or, do different diasporas around the postcolonial world need to reject the new master's products to interrupt how the African dandies are

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manipulated? By keeping in mind the various ways the Sapeurs have been commodified recently, maybe *Swadeshi*-style boycotts are not extensive enough to counteract the work of multi-national companies or media outlets. The anti-consumerist strategy Anand offers us has its limits in a globalized economy, and consequently, we must try and imagine suitable alternatives.

Pairing *Untouchable* with the Sapeurs also helps us examine mimicry's place in the neocolonial struggle. Does imitation help currently subjugated groups challenge the Global North's control over commerce or media? If not, are the Sapeurs simply playing into the demands of consumer culture by dressing in high European fashion? We can see that the dandies are getting international attention because of their unique use of dress. Nevertheless, the companies who sell the Sapeurs' style still controls how the group and its ideology is portrayed. Bakha's efforts to imitate his English masters closely resembles this scenario as the colonizers continued to perceive the boy as Other despite his colonial uniform. Mimicry subsequently fails in both colonial India and postcolonial Congo, yet these setbacks help us understand that new forms and positions of resistance must be imagined. The subsequent chapters in this project draw our attention to various forms of agency and power as it is being exercised by different postcolonial communities. As such, we can look to these confrontations to identify what measures the global marginalized population needs to take to destabilize the international and ever-shifting form of contemporary "Empire."

Chapter Two

"Keeping this Damn Country in the Black:" Black Businesses and the Spread of Multiculturalism in Sam Selvon's *Moses Trilogy* and Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette*

In the opening pages of Sam Selvon's *Moses Ascending* (1975)*,* the aspirations of the immigrant protagonist are made clear: "After all these years paying rent, I had the ambition to own my own property in London, no matter how ruinous or dilapidated it was" (2). While scholars have celebrated Selvon's use of Caribbean dialect in his novel, none have examined the complexities behind Moses' aspirations to be a property owner in the former metropole. In fact, the character's longing for space is a reoccurring theme in the "Moses Trilogy" that begins almost twenty years earlier in *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). The significance of Moses' desire becomes profound when one considers that during the post-WWII period white landlords in London refused to rent or sell property to Caribbean immigrants. This discriminatory practice not only disallowed black Britons from settling in the area, but also restricted minorities from establishing economic spaces for their communities. When Moses is finally able to acquire a run-down home, he uses this space to provide lodging to London's dejected immigrants. The domestic environment quickly becomes a site of cultural exchange where Britons of different races form alliances through financial relationships. A similar situation arises in Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) as Omar struggles to purchase a commercial space and thrive within Thatcherite London. As a British-Pakistani, Omar seizes the opportunity to become a business owner to escape racial abuse and his disempowered position. A laundrette quickly becomes a space where Omar and his white partner Johnny

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form a cross-racial allegiance to challenge the cultural, racial, and sexual politics within his South London neighborhood. This chapter focuses on Moses' boarding house and Omar's laundrette to argue that economic spaces are sites of cultural transformation that allow non-white communities to alter the dominant identity of the city. The subsequent analysis presents a new perspective on Selvon and Kureishi's texts that champions the role of the black British consumer and entrepreneurs within contested areas of post-imperial London. While deterred from owning property or settling in the city, immigrant characters find alternative ways to enter Britain's larger economic system and diversify the metropole's cultural image.

In the aftermath of World War II, Britain's control over its colonies was waning as foreign subjects began to renegotiate their positions in a weakening empire. This shift in command was set in motion by the "motherland's" need for additional workers and soldiers during the war. Colonized groups seized this opportunity and gradually earned a more prominent role within the empire's structure. Consequently, Britain's reliance on foreign subjects exposed how much it depended on colonial resources and labor to uphold its position as a global power. This revelation helped push various colonies to begin their movement towards independence. To quiet the discontent in the empire, Prime Minister Clement Attlee's government passed the 1948 British Nationality Act to grant citizenship and full rights to all foreign subjects. This measure was implemented to spread a sense of egalitarianism between Britain and its colonies, however, this tactic instead functioned as "a means of securing Britain's role at the center of empire/commonwealth and securing the continuing dependence of parts of that empire"

(Paul 9). The 1948 law and subsequent immigration acts were also used to protect Britain's economic interests. Providing citizenship to colonial subjects created a massive workforce that could travel to Britain, fill vacant positions, and repopulate the nation. Attlee's government took advantage of these new resources and began recruiting workers they considered to be part of "British stock." White residents from South Africa, Australia, Canada and New Zealand were targeted for immigration while "British subjects" of Asian or African heritage were ignored (Paul 26). The arrival of Caribbean immigrants to post-war London was therefore not a desired occurrence since it disrupted Britain's homogenous identity.

On 22 June of 1948, the *Empire Windrush* arrived at the Tilbury Docks with 492 passengers from Jamaica, as well as several "stowaways," including women. Many of these prospective workers helped protect Britain in the war and were eager to continue serving their adopted motherland. Other immigrants traveled to London in search of a new life or financial opportunities. This Caribbean assemblage, known as the "Windrush Generation," would became the largest wave of black Britons to enter London after WWII. This unprecedented moment caused many white Londoners to believe that former subjects would soon overtake the city. The British government, therefore, took steps to make settlement a challenge for black immigrants. Despite being skilled workers, the *Windrush* passengers were labeled by the Colonial Office as "not volunteer workers or even British subjects but 'Jamaican Unemployed'" (Paul 116). This prejudicial tactic was not used against other Britons or European aliens that were simultaneously entering the city. In fact, the government continually helped "acceptable" groups like Irish and Italian

workers to find jobs, medical care, housing, and labor unions. The Attlee government only provided this type of service to *Windrush* passengers so that they might seem impartial in their treatment of black foreigners. Future arrivals from the Caribbean were left to fend for themselves in a city that offered them limited employment and social advancement.

The post-war era brought a surge of colonial immigrants to English cities, yet the racial transformation of London had a larger significance since it served as the former metropole. Unlike other colonial centers, the British Empire's capital underwent a drastic demographic change. Paris did not experience racial clashes since France fought its colonies back into submission rather than use legislation to suppress rebellion. At the same time VE Day celebrations were occurring in Paris in 1945, French troops, many of which were from the colonies, decimated anti-colonial demonstrators in Algeria. Madagascar and Indochina faced a similar brutality in the coming years as both colonies fought for independence. Charles Forsdick claims that Paris would not become post-imperial until the 1960s, which "was accompanied by large population shifts that had a considerable demographic impact on metropolitan France" (109). London, on the other hand, was quickly confronted with colonial immigration due to changes in citizenship and economic needs.

Fourteen years after the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's Parliament approved the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act to reduce the arrival of black Britons based on labor requirements. By setting up a voucher system that favored white immigrants, the state dictated what racial groups would be allowed to enter

Britain and serve its economic interests. "A" vouchers were provided to subjects that had a job waiting for them in Britain. The majority of these recipients were highly-educated workers that were generally not from the Caribbean. "B" vouchers were allocated to skilled or experienced subjects the state specifically recruited for its workforce. A few black Britons received these vouchers since the same labor could be found elsewhere in the empire. "C" vouchers were limited in quantity and given to a large group of unskilled workers (Paul 172). Most black Britons obtained these vouchers, yet a restrictive quota system only allowed few of them to leave the Caribbean. Black Londoners already settled in city quickly relocated their families in case further immigration restrictions would occur. The 1968 Commonwealth Immigrant Act responded to this situation by only admitting subjects who had at least one parent or grandparent born in Britain to enter the nation. Such narrow stipulations dramatically limited the number of Caribbean citizens that were qualified to settle in London.

Despite the state's discriminatory measures, the black British population continued to grow in the metropole, as did the fear of "reverse colonization."[20] White Londoners consequently relied upon discriminatory tactics to block the supposed invasion of the city. Specifically, white landlords refused to sell or rent property to black Britons to maintain London's dominant racial identity. Without the ability to easily purchase or lease property, minority groups were prevented from establishing neighborhoods that would help immigrant communities grow. This discriminatory

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[20] This term was initially created by Jamaican poet Louise Bennet in her 1966 work "Colonization in Reverse." The poem's speaker describes Jamaican immigrants as colonizers of post-war England.

practice steadily gained popularity as anti-immigration sentiments intensified in the city

and political arenas. Accordingly, in 1968, Parliament member Enoch Powell openly

voiced his fear of being overrun by black foreigners in his infamous "Rivers of Blood"

speech. In his address to Conservative party members, Powell warned that further

immigration would allow outsiders to overtake England's neighborhoods and permit "the

black man [to have] the whip hand over the white man" (2). Powell described this shift in

power through an anecdote of an old white pensioner who finds herself forced out of her

home by black Britons:

> Immigrants have offered to buy her house - at a price which the prospective
> landlord would be able to recover from his tenants in a week, or at most a few
> months. She is becoming afraid to go out. Windows are broken. She finds excreta
> pushed through her letterbox. When she goes to the shops, she is followed by
> children, charming, wide-grinning piccaninnies. They cannot speak English, but
> one word they know. "Racialist." (6)

With the use of such imagery, Powell's speech pushed white landlords to protect property

from outsiders looking to "invade" England. "The Rivers of Blood" speech subsequently

caused black Britons to suffer widespread discrimination when they attempted to inhabit

and possess areas in the city.

Margaret Thatcher, who was an admirer of Powell, preyed upon this anxiety

throughout her term as Prime Minister in the 1980s to rally support from a large white

population that she believed were fearful of being "swamped by people of a different

culture" ("Rather Swamped" 2). In addition to Caribbean groups, these "people" came to

include South Asians that were the latest assemblage of colonial citizens arriving in

London. Thatcher, like Powell, characterized the black British community as an invading

foreign force that sought to displace white residents. The racial discord fostered by

Thatcher intensified further as Britain suffered financial troubles and widespread labor strikes. Economic opportunities were scarce and black immigrants were paradoxically considered to be both financial burdens and competition for jobs. Thatcher's turn to neoliberal ideals and economic individualism further exasperated circumstances by destroying solidarity within racial groups. With the elimination of government aid, immigrant and lower-class citizens' prospects of succeeding in the former metropole dwindled. Entrepreneurism subsequently became a method of survival and South Asians, like other immigrants, scrambled to gain the resources needed for financial success and social advancement. Once again, property was a valuable commodity white citizens sought to limit the progression of black British communities.

With limited access to property or economic prospects, Caribbean and South Asian immigrants were hindered from establishing businesses and shifting the culture of urban neighborhoods. Although past scholarship about this period focuses on the various ways the state tried to stop black British settlement in London, none of these analyses consider how economics systems and space were used to protect the post-imperial city from non-white outsiders. This approach is important to consider since it opens up new ways of understanding not only how dominant groups try to use economics to defend the space and stability of empire, but also how the colonized bypass and challenge these measures through the use of alternative industries and business practices. The overall result of this struggle helps marginal groups renegotiate race relations and build a more multicultural city through the creation of alternative markets and financial opportunities.

The relationship between space and economics provides a unique perspective on how black Britons used property to augment the cultural identity and racial relationships in London. This chapter analyzes how black Britons used space to create businesses and alternative economies that helped establish immigrant communities and foster the growth of multiculturalism in the city. By purchasing property in the metropole, immigrants gained access to small areas that could be used to fight against discriminatory measures. Black-owned businesses specifically do this work by providing marginal groups with economic opportunities denied by the ruling population. These spaces also carried foreign commodities from the Caribbean or South Asia that brought elements of the colonies into the city. As such, both white and black consumers purchased these items and diversified the cultural practices happening in the urban center.

Sam Selvon and Hanif Kureishi's texts exemplify how black Britons use property to create alternative economies that transform the identity and race relations of London. Specifically, Selvon's novellas *Lonely Londoners* (1956) and *Moses Ascending* (1975) demonstrate how Moses, a Trinidadian immigrant of the "Windrush Generation," creates a boarding house that accommodates disenfranchised black Britons. Through this business, Moses gains social mobility and power that helps him challenge the racist and anti-immigrant atmosphere espoused by politicians like Powell. With the help of his white assistant Bob, Selvon's titular character renegotiates London's racial hierarchy by creating a more convivial space in his boarding house. Likewise, the immigrant smuggling ring Moses runs in his house thwarts London's discriminatory immigration laws and fosters black British community growth. The boarding house subsequently

serves as a location where both white and black Britons challenge London's divisive

racial atmosphere through the landlord and tenant relationship. Selvon's work proposes

that monetary exchanges can be used not only to build an economy for marginal groups,

but also how these parties can use this resource to create a more multicultural society. In

comparison to Selvon's work, Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) details

the life of Omar, a British-Pakistani character that desperately works towards starting a

business in Thatcherite England. Opportunities for social progression are limited for

Omar, yet Kureishi's text explores how the protagonist purchases and uses a laundrette to

rise out of the disempowered lower-class. While Omar ascribes to Thatcher's neoliberal

dogma, he also uses his entrepreneurial aspirations to create a successful business that

empowers his lower-class community. Through his partnership with Johnny, a white

friend and lover, Omar's laundrette becomes a place where marginalized groups work

together to advance socially and fight against Thatcher-era xenophobia. The successful

business that Omar and Johnny create help them gain power in their neighborhoods and

improve the living conditions of South London residents.

City, Space, and Economics

  Henri Lefebvre recognizes that space is negotiated through social relationships

and power struggles, yet he adds that the changeable quality of cities can be harnessed by

populations that manage "property relationships (especially the ownership of the earth, of

land)" (85). The acquisition of space provides individuals with the necessary resource to

enact change in a regulated environment. This requirement for control places

socioeconomically marginalized citizens in direct conflict with the population that posseses the city's buildings or property. As in Selvon and Kureishi's texts, London's white population owns most of the property and refuses to rent or sell to black Britons. Characters like Moses and Omar need to seek out unconventional methods of ownership to sidestep these discriminatory practices. Lefebvre specifically saw this process of re-organization occurring in urban areas after World War II where the "city historically constructed is no longer lived and no longer understood practically" (148). In this sense, traditional cities do not exist for enriching people's lives. Rather, they serve the interests and advancement of an elite class. This unjust configuration leads Lefebvre to call for urban reform that "questions the structures, the immediate, and daily relations of existing society" (154). Accordingly, since the lower or marginalized classes are barred from the traditional city, these groups must be the agents of change that demand to have the "right to the city" (Lefebvre 158). Lefebvre contends that this class will end the segregation of the city and reconstruct a shared centrality where all residents can formulate the future of urban life. This culminating vision closely resembles the creation of a multicultural city where citizens of diverse of backgrounds collectively shape their environment.

Postcolonial scholars develop Lefebvre's articulations by addressing how the metropole can be changed through the work of formerly colonized groups. Such a connection explains how London's racial and cultural identity can be disrupted by black Britons' use of urban economic space. John McLeod recognizes that "the metropolis is transformed by the manipulative and citational acts of newcomers who negotiate space in terms of the social, cultural, and personal factors from other times and locations" (26).

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Beyond noting the malleable potential of urban areas, McLeod points out that immigrants' non-white identity and cultural aspects like dance or music help modify space within the post-imperial environment. Sarah Upstone also speaks to the transformative promise of the metropole's space by claiming that "the oppressive city is also the most politically powerful: within it, there are avenues for resistance and subversion" (104). Specifically, Upstone asserts that marginal populations can convert the identity of urban areas by "celebrating difference at the level of the public buildings and certain open spaces (104). Rashmi Varma echoes and expands Upstone's view by claiming that the city is a 'conjuntural space' that produces "a critical combination of historical events, material bodies, structural forces and representational economies which propel new constellations of domination and resistance" (1). Varma adds to this discussion by noting how space in the metropole specifically produces interconnected economic systems that can help marginal groups advance in the city. Much like Lefebvre, these perspectives anticipate that disempowered citizens can work together to reclaim the urban environment and augment its use to provide opportunities to peripheral communities.

Although McLeod, Upstone, and Varma have used spatial theory to investigate how postcolonial communities can restructure the metropole, very little work has been done to link these examinations to economic systems. Eiman O. Zein-Elabin and S. Charusheela recognize the severity of this neglect when they state that "postcolonial scholars have engaged only sporadically with Economics, leaving their contributions wide open to charges of irrelevance and even complicity with hegemony" (1). This

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analysis of Selvon and Kureishi's work rectifies this matter by yoking together postcolonial thought, spatial theory, and economic studies to demonstrate how markets, products, and services flow through space and construct the identity and culture of a city. The creation of black-owned businesses and markets provide marginal groups the spatial and financial means needed to shape the metropole. Beyond the resources needed for survival, these areas and economic systems allow Moses and Omar to flourish in urban areas by utilizing and creating illicit industries.

Colonization in Reverse

Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and *Moses Ascending* focus on the challenges black Britons face as they attempt to locate homes and jobs within the Shepard's Bush and Bayswater neighborhoods.[21] Although Moses initially finds himself prohibited from owning property by white landlords, these novellas demonstrate how dispossessed immigrants used alternative methods to explore the spatial and economic possibilities of the urban environment. Scholars have previously recognized the significance of space in Selvon's work as an element that helps map the obstructions and opportunities presented to Caribbean immigrants in post-war London. In respect to mobility through space, Lisa M. Kabesh argues that Selvon's work "charts where his characters might go and might not, where they are free and where the color bar literally bars that movement" (1). Kabesh's focus on mobility, or the lack of it, helps to define the cartographic limitations

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[21] Due to the geographic focus and representations of space, my analysis concerns these two novellas of the "Moses Trilogy" since Selvon's third installment, *Moses Migrating*, concentrates on the main character's return to Trinidad.

imposed upon Moses and other Caribbean immigrants. Alison Donnell also focuses on Selvon's use of movement and space to argue that each character's journey through London helps identify the "horizontal zones of attachment and possible solidarities across groupings that reconfigure vertically inscribed genealogical paradigm of belonging to place" (55). For Donnell, the spaces that bring the immigrants together serve as areas that help build community and allegiances between immigrants from different Caribbean nations. In a more literary context, Rebecca Dyer emphasizes that Selvon's descriptions of the urban area "contributes his characters' London to the existing body of texts set in the city" (110). Dyer claims that Selvon's literature challenges more canonical depictions of the city and provides marginalized perspectives about life in the metropole. Although these studies identify how Selvon negotiates space in his work, this chapter approaches a different perspective by considering how disempowered immigrants capitalize on rare instances of property ownership in London. A boarding house and an immigrant smuggling ring help Moses earn income and social progression, yet these economies also assist the black British community in circumventing racist laws and social practices. By housing and assisting different immigrant groups, Moses uses a built space to create inter-racial and economic relationships that produce a more multicultural environment within London's neighborhoods.

Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* documents the economic struggles endured by the black British community through the novella's protagonist Moses. Based on his race and immigrant identity, Moses is continually met with hostility as he attempts to live and work in various sections of London. He remarks that while he "bleeds to make this

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country prosperous" (*Lonely* 21) through his work, foreigners like a local Polish restaurateur are more readily welcomed in the city. The treatment received by each immigrant helps expose how race determines how a foreigner and their labor is embraced by London's dominant society. The re-building of the city is a limited project that keeps out individuals who do not reflect the prevailing identity and culture of the metropole. Correspondingly, this discriminatory system works to maintain a racial hierarchy that keeps black Britons in subordinate and dispossessed positons.

Housing is a resource that black Britons are excluded from, and therefore they are left to inhabit unfavorable areas where they are subjected to abuse. The ability to possess or affect space is central to this prejudiced treatment since it limits an immigrant's ability to shape the city. Accordingly, the longing for domestic space and the agency it provides has been featured in other works of colonial literature. V.S. Naipaul's 1961 novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* centers on Mohun Biswas' pursuit of a private residence in British-ruled Trinidad. Like other Indo-Trinidadians, he finds himself alienated from both the European colonizer and colonized communities on the island. This marginalized status leaves him in an estranged position where he cannot find a space to establish himself in the nation. He frequents different homes, yet these structures are never solely owned by the character. This inability to control space repeatedly disallows the character from shaping his surrounding environment. Like Biswas, Moses is restricted from owning space and can only be a temporary tenant that is continually exploited by landlords. Many Caribbean immigrants share Moses' predicament and live in large homes whose rooms have been converted into smaller, overcrowded, and overpriced lodgings.

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Although Moses' housing opportunities are limited, he recognizes that black Britons can influence the identity and culture of the city through consumer practices. The growing Caribbean population needs certain products or services that can be provided by local businesses. Consequently, black Britons' consumer demands begin to transform space in west London by dictating what goods or industries are contained in different shops. Before the arrival of the "Windrush Generation," Moses remarks that the only place in London that offered Caribbean food was "a continental shop in one the back streets of SoHo" (*Lonely* 63). This situation gradually changes as a local grocer on Harrow Road recognizes the buying power of the nearby black British neighborhood.

> This test who had the grocery, from the time spades start to settle in the district, he find out what sort of things they like to eat, and he stock up with a lot of things like blackeye peas and red bean and pepper sauce, and tinned breadfruit and ochro and smoke herring, and as long as the spades spending money he don't care, in fact is big encouragement. (*Lonely* 21)

These foreign goods gradually overtake the store's shelves as it becomes the single business that caters to black Britons. However, over time, more stores begin to stock these foods to attract Caribbean immigrants and their money. The influence of black British consumers becomes so strong in the area that local stores even change the way they conduct business. Tanty, an elderly Jamaican woman, confronts a shopkeeper about not accepting credit or "trust" (*Lonely* 66) from his Caribbean customers. As Tanty explains, "Where I come from you take what you want and pay every Friday" (*Lonely* 66). While this economic practice is not initially provided by the grocer, the overwhelming demand from the local community drives the store to change its policies. This adjustment helps black British consumers remain in the area since they are "poor

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people and [they] don't always have money to buy" *Lonely* 66). Tanty's struggle to change the store's economic structure therefore introduces a foreign cultural practice into a traditional space.

A similar transformation occurs in the the East End, where a tailor shop begins to manufacture custom suits for black Britons. Like the grocer, the tailor's business is continually "full up with spades" (*Lonely* 64) since he caters to the consumer demands of the local community. Many of Moses' friends specifically shop at this location because they have adopted the designs that are popular in the Caribbean. Beyond changing the style of their products, the business also alters its interior space to accommodate foreign customers. The walls of the shop display "photos of all the black boxers in the world and photo of any presentation or function what have spades in it" (*Lonely* 64). The economic space is therefore transformed in both its appearance and function. Black Britons create a communal meeting area in the shop that introduces their cultural elements into a traditional neighbourhood. English products are soon replaced by Caribbean goods, and a London store becomes a multicultural space frequented and shaped by immigrants. Surrounding buildings and spaces also change due to the common appearance of black Britons in these areas. However, despite these small victories, Moses and his friends still have to endure racist treatment by white landlords regardless of their patronage. Consumer practices alone cannot change the power relations in London. Rather, as Lefebrve insists, the marginalized class must possess urban space to become empowered and change their positions in society.

Moses is drawn towards purchasing property that can provide black Britons with economic and social possibilities. The possession of a home goes beyond simply obtaining a stable area for habitation. Rather, having unrestricted access to this space allows Moses to create a business that will assist in the advancement of the black British community. This desire is shared by other Caribbean immigrants such as Big City, who fantasizes of living in a neighborhood where he can reverse discrimination by placing a "Keep the Water Coloured. No Rooms for Whites" (*Lonely* 87) sign in his home's window. This challenge to racist organizations like the KBW illustrates the possibilities that the possession of domestic space can provide. Both Moses and Big City perceive the home as a setting where black immigrants can work together to challenge discrimination and change the racial politics of Shepard's Bush. By the end of *The Lonely Londoners*, Moses is determined to purchase a boarding house to improve the economic opportunities of black Britons.

Nearly twenty years later in *Moses Ascending*, the titular character is now a veteran inhabitant of London, yet still seeking to improve his socioeconomic circumstances. Moses' desire for advancement comes at a time when London's racial issues are further complicated after the 1958 Notting Hill race riots and Powell's infamous anti-immigration speech in 1968. Amid the rising racial tension, Moses concludes that he can no longer remain a simple tenant suffering abuse from hate groups and racist landlords. This perception comes directly from Moses' experiences that have shown him that "if you are a tenant, you catch your arse forever, but if you are a landlord, it is a horse of a different color" (*Moses* 2). Property becomes the resource that Moses

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desires to purchase to advance his social status and escape mistreatment. While unable to easily buy a home from a white landlord, Moses is given the rare opportunity to purchase property from a fellow Caribbean immigrant. Buying the dilapidated home increases Moses' influence by making him a landlord and business owner that can slowly re-shape Shepard's Bush's cultural identity. To begin the area's transformation, Moses opens his home to the immigrant community and "avoid[s] any petty restrictions for the tenants who was giving me my bread" (*Moses* 5). While the character is initially only interested in making money, his business practice reverses the prejudicial habit of not renting to non-white foreigners and provides London's dejected groups a housing opportunity. The "come one, come all" (*Moses* 5) atmosphere of the boarding house therefore brings people of all races and nationalities together to begin creating a multicultural area in the neighborhood.

Moses's new role as a business owner places the character in a powerful position where he can restructure traditional race relations. This situation is evident as Moses hires Bob, a white English "immigrant" from the Midlands, to take care of the house matters in exchange for free lodging and education. Inside the boarding house, the traditional racial dynamics become reversed. As Moses sits in the penthouse, Bob attends to the tenant's needs and daily domestic work. Moses' leisurely existence is here juxtaposed to Bob's grueling routine that brings him to "learn the ways of the black man" (*Moses* 6). Moses assumes the traditional position of power held by whites while Bob undertakes the role of the subjugated black worker. Moses' authority in the home extends even further as he teaches Bob how to read and write. Through this relationship, the black Briton assumes

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the role of the didactic white master who improves the life of the "savage" other. This unconventional situation leads Moses to call Bob "his man Friday" (*Moses* 6) in direct reference to Daniel Defoe's colonial-era text, *Robinson Crusoe*. However, despite his new abilities, Moses ultimately refrains from substituting one unjust racial hierarchy for another. Instead, he uses his boarding house to create a more inclusive environment where blacks and whites work together for communal success. Moses and Bob form a partnership to make the house economically successful and advance each other's social standing. This economic relationship creates a multicultural environment within the home where "black and white can live in harmony" (*Moses* 6) instead of in competition with one another.

Beyond economic success, the house is also a space where both white and black workers gradually change their perspectives about each other. As noted previously, Moses' friendship and business relationship with Bob help him understand that whites can be allies in the cultural transformation of the metropole. In fact, Bob's frequent interactions with non-white tenants drive him to become an ally to the emerging Black Power movement in London. Much of Bob's transformation occurs when he visits the basement of the boarding house which has become the headquarters for the Shepard's Bush Black Power chapter. Within the lower-level room, Bob is introduced to:

> all kinds of Black literature, Lamming and Salkey and Baldwin, and photos of famous Black men whatever their fields of endeavor, pin-up on the walls and advertisements and notices of various publications and forthcoming and forth going meetings, parties, dances, lectures. (*Moses* 35)

As in the scene at the Harrow Road grocery store or tailor shop, the basement is filled with cultural elements that define the black British community. Bob's introduction to

these foreign signifiers gradually change his perspectives on race and realizes that "black

people is human too" (*Moses* 6). These ties ultimately foster cross-racial allegiances that

help make the home a multicultural area where interdependency improves the lives of

citizens. Much like Lefebvre's vision of a shared urban centrality, Moses' business

rejects the traditional power structures and racial politics of the city to produce a

convivial space where all citizens work together to reshape the neighborhood.

In addition to strengthening the ties between black and white Britons, Moses'

house also helps the South Asian community grow in London despite the laws and public

outcry against colonial immigration. At first, Moses perceives this minority as "poor

subjects for integration" (*Moses* 88) since his interactions with the demographic are

limited. Since South Asians are the newest wave of immigrants arriving in the city,

Moses sees them as a foreign invading force with "dark, scowling fades, piercing

resentful eyes" and "inscrutable miens and bearings" (*Moses* 95). Despite his feelings

towards these newcomers, Selvon's protagonist recognizes that this new group are

potential customers. Letting rooms out to South Asians is a source of income for Moses;

much like boarding black Britons that Moses perceives as below him in status. However,

Moses eventually begins to identify with the foreign community by sharing his built

space. Through interactions with his Pakistani tenants, Farouk and Faizull, Moses comes

to recognize that South Asians, like black Britons, are also discriminated against by

prejudice white Londoners. Some citizens "lobby the House of Commons and write

letters to Parliament" (*Moses* 118) to restrict the entry of South Asians and maintain the

city's traditional character. Other organizations, like the far-right National Front, "march

in protest waving banners and shouting imprecations" (*Moses* 18). Becoming aware of these public acts of racism and xenophobia helps Moses understand that his South Asian tenants face the same mistreatment he endured as a new immigrant to the city.

When Moses becomes of aware of these issues, he begins to see that his South Asian tenants are now facing the same discriminatory environment he once confronted as a new arrival to London. The shared immigrant experience propels Moses to augment the use of his home and challenge the laws and economic systems that limit the rights of marginalized people. In particular, Selvon's protagonist joins forces with two Pakistanis, Faizull and Farouk, to use the domestic space as an immigrant smuggling ring that circumvents Britain's restrictive immigration quotas and legislation. The boarding house temporarily accommodates undocumented South Asians who are legally restricted from entering and living in London. Moses' business helps facilitate this process and slowly change the identity of the Shepard's Bush neighborhood. The influx of South Asians to the area bring not only the immigrants but also their unique cultural products such as food, music, and literature. The material impact of these immigrants helps foster the growth of the multicultural environment and provides black Britons a safe place to build their communities. Like the relationship with Bob, Moses and his Pakistanis partners advance their positions in London by creating an economic allegiance. The dealings within the home also help dispel Moses' prejudices of the South Asian community. While helping immigrants acclimate to the city's culture and language, Moses begins to see his tenants as members of a larger non-white community. This view helps Moses identify the larger transformative project being undertaken by different sets of colonial immigrants.

Although they are separated by nationality or race, Moses must band together with other black Britons to protect their collective interests. The protagonist's emotional attachment to his comrades becomes evident as the immigrants leave his home and he remarks that "their worries are now beginning as they are let loose on the British public" (*Moses* 117). Moses' sympathy for the South Asians reveals that their struggles will continue in London as the city negotiates its multicultural transition. The goal of transforming the post-imperial city is however more attainable as Caribbean and South Asian communities have formed alliances for mutual growth. Such partnerships continue to flourish as different waves of colonial immigrants enter the post-imperial city and continue to establish cross-racial business partnerships.

Professional Businessmen, Not Professional Pakistanis: Entrepenuerism in Kureishi's My Beautiful Laundrette

By the end of the 1970s, the fear of immigration continued to grow as England entered into a period of economic recession. The animosity towards black Britons reached new levels as conservative politicians and far-right groups claimed that outsiders were burdening the nation and displacing white citizens. To combat these issues, some white Britons advocated for immigration quotas or refused to rent or sell property to foreigners. As leader of the Conservative party, Margaret Thatcher seized this moment to gain support from voters who felt "rather swamped by people of a different culture" ("Rather Swamped" 2). This rhetoric appealed to disaffected white Britons and subsequently helped Thatcher get elected as Prime Minister. To rebuild England's

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"traditional" culture and economic power, Thatcher used neoliberal policies to scale back government assistance and promote economic individualism. In diverse areas such as London, race relations became strained as citizens were pitted against one another to survive in a hyper-competitive and capitalistic environment. Accordingly, David Harvey characterizes Thatcherite London as a place where "all forms of social solidarity were to be dissolved in favor of individualism, private property, personal responsibility, and family values" (23). Therefore, in addition to attacking multiculturalism, Thatcher also promoted heteronormative and suppressive body politics to shape England's identity. These stipulations ultimately began to sever the ties between class, race, gender, and sexuality that connected marginalized communities in London.

Of the few avenues provided for social progression, entrepreneurship was an opportunity that dispossessed groups could use to advance in the city. Particularly, newly arriving Indian and Pakistani immigrants quickly adhered to Thatcher's demands by establishing businesses throughout London. The Prime Minister eventually lauded the South Asian community for being the nation's new "meritocrats" (Ogden 175) that were bolstering England's economic resurgence. To triumph as entrepreneurs, black Britons needed to acquire space to build businesses in London's contested neighborhoods. Such a task was not easy since anti-immigrant sentiments barred outsiders from owning and transforming places in predominantly white neighborhoods. However, like the characters in Selvon's work, peripheral groups also found strategies for entering into Thatcherite London and changing the city's culture.

Hanif Kureishi's 1985 screenplay and film adaptation for *My Beautiful Laundrette* portrays this process by revolving its plot around a dilapidated business in South London. In both texts, Kureishi's main character Omar, a second-generation British-Pakistani, aspires to purchase a laundrette that can help improve his social standing. Previous scholarship on the spatial significance of the laundrette recognizes the formidable qualities of the property. Rebecca Dyer argues that the laundrette serves as a space that fosters "an alternative to maintaining the rigid boundaries that separate various races and classes" ("Dirty Work" 61). The intermixing of Londoners in the laundrette creates a collective atmosphere that challenges the social separation promoted by Thatcher's policies. Rahul K. Guardiola expands upon the laundrette's destabilizing nature by claiming that Omar uses the space to "queer the traditional spaces of home through non-heteronormative acts (39). The laundrette is therefore a location where Omar and his white partner Johnny can foster a relationship that is outside of the traditional familial and sexual roles championed by Thatcher's politics. Finally, Kim Duff argues that sections of London's urban environment, such as the laundrette, promotes the "social production of space that provides a context for new forms of Thatcherite notions of participatory citizenship" (113). Although these scholars recognize different opportunities the laundrette provides, this examination focuses on how the acquisition of such a space allows Omar to create a business that challenges the individualistic and divisive form of entrepreneurism advocated by Thatcher. By using illicit markets and forging cross-racial economic allegiances*,* Omar purchases a launderette with his white partner and both characters gain elevated socio-economic positions in London. The

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protagonist's alternative business practices also create a commercial space that allows dispossessed citizens to work together to challenge the city's divisive environment. Omar rejects this principle and instead engages in a cross-racial and homosexual relationship where he employs the help of a white Briton, Johnny, to help build a successful business. This partnership, both in economic and romantic terms, helps both characters use each other's skills to rise up from the lower-class and foster the growth of a multicultural and sexually inclusive space in the city. The union of South Asian and white British characters therefore dismisses Thatcher's individualistic and competitive neoliberal society by forming a more unified city.

My Beautiful Laundrette's plot emphasizes the centrality of space as it pertains to surviving in the neoliberal city. Specifically, within Omar's neighborhood the citizens that are unable to possess or profit off space are expelled from society. This condition disproportionately affects the lower class and immigrant groups like Omar's family that are in a disadvantaged position due to their socio-economic standing and race. Kureishi portrays the living conditions of disempowered immigrants by starting his screenplay within a "large falling-down place, in South London" (*Laundrette* 9). This setting uses space to characterize the fallout of Thatcherite policies that refuse to provide government aid to neighborhoods that need monetary assistance. Fittingly, the housing complex bears graffiti that exclaims "Your greed will be the death of us all" (*Laundrette* 9). The crumbling building is filled with disempowered squatters who are unable to claim or influence the spaces they inhabit. A similar urban environment is also found in Kureishi's later work, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), that revolves around the open sexual

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relationship between the play's titular characters. While most of the plot focuses on inter-racial romances, there is also an underlying criticism about Thatcherite London and how the city displaces and dehumanizes the poor and non-white Britons. Homeless Danny, a character whose identity is tied to his inability to possess space, represents estranged Londoners that are "just trying to find a place in this rotten society" (*Sammy and Rosie* 57). He is reduced to living in squalor under a motorway with other lower-class citizens since he is unable to own and use space for economic profit. Despite the increasing level of poverty in his neighborhood, no form of government aid or human compassion is provided to help the displaced Londoners. His disempowered position is juxtaposed by a wealthy real estate developer that purchases the makeshift neighborhood. By obtaining the urban space, the developer can oust Homeless Danny and other squatters to begin constructing lucrative residential spaces. The promise of economic gain via space permits the developer to exercise power over Danny's community and neighborhood's structure. Thus, within his two plays Kureishi emphasizes that the possession of space is vital to urban existence, inclusion, and the formation of the city.

While immigrants in Kureishi's texts are in disadvantaged positions, social mobility is possible for those who adhere to Thatcherite policies that favor individuality over community. Accordingly, in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, the Pakistani character Salim personifies the immigrant meritocrat that gains standing and power by contributing to the city's financial network. Like the property developer in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, Salim purchases dilapidated spaces in poor neighborhoods to create and control profitable sections of London. In the opening of the film version of *Laundrette*, Salim "renovates"

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(9) the squatters' building with the help of four Jamaican men that forcibly cast out

tenants. Among the dejected are Johnny and his friend Genghis, two lower-class white

Britons suffering from the hostile conditions of the neoliberal city. Regardless of the

racial differences between Salim and the teens, the Pakistani businessman has authority

over the squatters and their makeshift home. Salim's power also allows him to command

four Jamaican employees who must oust fellow lower-class citizens to please their boss.

This situation reveals how Salim must forego allegiances with other racial groups to

secure his profits since "we're [immigrants are] nothing in England without money"

(*Laundrette* 48). Like Salim, Omar's uncle Nasser also epitomizes the type of immigrant

that follows neoliberal standards to gain positioning in the city. Owning and operating

various businesses and properties leads Nasser to proudly boast that he is responsible for

"keeping this damn country in the black" (*Laundrette* 14). Thus, through his financial

contributions to the state, Nasser finds himself included in Thatcherite society and the

powerful upper class. Participating in the buildup of the dominant economy also benefits

Nasser by allowing the Pakistani immigrant to pass within London's largely white

population. Being a "professional businessmen" helps South Asian entrepreneurs like

Nasser and Salim shed the racial stigma of being "professional Pakistanis" (*Laundrette*

41) that are supposedly inferior to their white counterparts. They effectively demonstrate

how South Asians can transform their racialized and disempowered positions by

following the tenets of Thatcher's societal structure.

Nasser and Salim gradually introduce Omar to the meritocratic lifestyle by

displaying the power that comes from possesing property. Initially, the young character

begins working in his uncle's garage which is a "private place where wealthy

businessmen keep their cars during the day" (*Laundrette* 13). This scene shows Omar

admiring the various Mercedes, Rolls Royces, and Volvos that occupy space within the

carpark. Omar's introduction to the family business begins as he enters Uncle Nasser's

office in the back of the garage. In this small center of operations, Nasser and Salim

discuss how they will rescue Omar from "the dole queue" (*Laundrette* 15) by providing

him with a job. Introducing Omar to the family business gives Nasser and Salim a sense

of gratifcation since they are able to reinforce the ideology that will bring them wealth. In

fact, Salim exclaims that "Mrs. Thatcher will be pleased with me" (*Laundrette* 15) for

bringing Omar into the economic system. Salim and Nasser's sense of satisfaction comes

from the characters' ability to fullfill their roles as "productive" – both in the

heteronormative and economically fruitful sense – citizens for the female Prime Minister.

The heterosexual undertones continue in the office as a movie poster of *Some Like it Hot*

displays a lustful, open-mouthed Marilyn Monroe. Later on in this sequence, Nasser and

his mistress Rachel have sex within the office while Omar is outside vigourously rubbing

soap over the hood of a car. This intermixing of capitalist ideology and heterosexuality in

the office ultimately creates an economic space filled with the characteristics that

Thatcher promoted in her society.[22]

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[22] Along with advocating for entrepreneurism, Thatcher promoted the nuclear family and
heteronormativity as two vital aspects for Britain's growth in political and economic
power. See Rahul Gairola's "Capitalist House, Queer Homes: National Belonging and
Transgressive Erotics in My Beautiful Laundrette" in *South Asian Popular Culture* vol. 7,
no.1 for more on these interconnected issues.

Throughout Kureishi's narrative the relationship between heterosexuality and capitalism is ever-present in the spaces that the male South Asian entrepreneurs inhabit. In a high-class restaurant, Nasser attempts to continue Omar's business education by openly celebrating the possibilities of Thatcherite economics by stating, "In this damn country which we hate and love, you can get anything you want. It's all spread out and available. That's why I believe in England. You just have to know how to squeeze the tits of the system (*Laundrette* 17). Economic advancement and social mobility for heterosexual males is once again described as a both a capitalist and sexual practice. Such conversation carries on in Nasser's country-side mansion where he and his business partners share stories of sexual conquests and economic strategies. The men are seated on Nasser's large bed as Omar is left standing at the threshold of the door. Symbolically, Omar is positioned on the periphery of this community's inner circle due to his neophyte status and homosexual identity. Thus, before Omar can fully join the group, Nasser insists that his cronies "make him a man first" (*Laundrette* 22). Heterosexual desire presents itself in the form of Nasser's daughter Tania who can be seen outside of the room watching the men. While Omar is listening to the groups' advice, Tania exposes her breasts to attract her cousin's attention. This ploy proves to be ineffective as Omar ignores Tania's sexual advances when they meet privately in another room. Instead of being intimate with his cousin, Omar prefers to discuss his future entrepreneurial goals. Such actions reveal that Omar is attracted to the lifestyle of a businessperson, yet he will not succumb to the sexual practices of a loyal Thatcherite.

Omar's fascination with entrepreneurism is driven by his desire to improve his economic and social standing. Unlike his Uncle Nasser, Omar and his father inhabit a "small, damp and dirty place which hasn't been decorated for years" (*Laundrette* 11) in a lower-class neighborhood. The different lifestyles of each brother directly correlate to their perspectives on Thatcher's politics. Omar's father believes that "education is power" (*Laundrette* 18) rather than the accumulation of wealth and property by capitalist means. Papa continually asks Omar to go to college rather than simply chase wealth and become a "little Britisher" (*Laundrette* 25) that abandons the struggle of the black and lower-class community. Unfortunately for Papa, London is no place for a "leftist socialist Pakistani" (*Laundrette* 21) that does not contribute to the larger capitalist system. Omar and his father are thus left to suffer amongst the lower-class that is neglected by other citizens and the state. However, once Nasser introduces Omar to the transformative opportunities of capitalism, the young British-Pakistani comes to recognize the benefits of being a business owner.

Omar chooses to enter into Prime Minister Thatcher's economic system but he is determined to succeed on his own terms. Rather than rejecting other marginalized groups for the sake of financial gain, Omar embraces the opportunity to work with and within the disenfranchised community. A business partnership with Johnny exemplifies this alternative form of entrepreneurism since the characters work across racial lines and against London's heterosexual norm. Based on his recent business experiences, Omar recognizes that he must possess space within his neighborhood to gain social mobility and power. A run-down laundrette subsequently becomes the property on which Omar

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hopes to build his economic empire. Initially, the young entrepreneurs lack the funding to own and renovate their space; however, they access their peripheral positions to find an alternative entrance into Thatcher's economy. Specifically, Omar steals a shipment of cocaine from Salim's drug-running business to fund the renovation of the laundrette. Thanks to Johnny's "bad boy" (*Laundrette* 31) past, the characters are able to easily sell their illegal products to a local drug dealer. It is important to note here that Omar and Johnny's unconventional and unethical business practices do not benefit the growth of the legal economy. Rather, the profits of the drug trade help the characters' purchase their laundrette via illicit consumer exchanges. The main characters in Kureishi and Selvon's texts subsequently both use unlawful methods – selling drugs or smuggling immigrants – to attain their upward mobility in London. In fact, the South Asian protagonist's unethical deed is not only a questionable action, but also a controversial depiction of a second-generation immigrant. Stuart Hall recognizes that Kureishi's work is problematic in "New Ethnicities," yet ultimately the scholar celebrates the screenplay for "its refusal to represent the black experience in Britain as monolithic, self-contained, sexually stabilized and always, 'right on' in a word, always and only positive" (449). As such, while Omar's drug business needs to be criticized, Hall helps us see that Thatcher's society pushes the poor and non-white to find new, although questionable, methods of surviving and progressing in the post-imperial city.

The possession of space eventually allows Omar to change the identity and economic conditions of his south London neighborhood. Initially, the rundown laundrette is situated in an "area of run-down second-hand shops" (*Laundrette* 26) that characterize

the lower-class areas. The failed economic environment is prominent within the laundrette since much of the equipment is damaged, and the shop is filled with loitering kids rather than customers. Omar uses his newly earned authority to renovate the business to improve the social and financial situation of the neighborhood. While Omar has adhered to Thatcher's neoliberal principles to a certain extent, he chooses to reject the preservation of the dominant system that seeks to separate communities from one another. Omar instead decides to keep his cross-racial partnership with Johnny where the white character will help run the laundrette, maintain the machines, and physically remove any loitering kids. Johnny's role in the business centers around the transformation of space. As depicted in a later scene, Omar walks around the laundrette with a pen and pad as Johnny enthusiastically "demolishes existing structures" (*Laundrette* 3) with an axe. Coincidentally, this working relationship closely mirrors the racial dynamic between Moses and Bob in *Moses Ascending*. Moses and Omar are both able to hire white employees and subvert the racial hierarchy due to their possession of space. However, both black characters decide against replicating such oppressive systems. Omar instead hopes to "build a laundrette the size of the Ritz" (*Laundrette* 37). The unlikely allegiance between Omar and Johnny consequently challenges the isolating societal system promoted by Thatcher where different races are pitted against one another for survival. Omar therefore reaches out to Johnny to help him escape his dispossessed position and create a new urban environment in South London.

The renovated laundrette comes to reflect the neighborhood's restructured identity. Omar and Johnny change the business' name from Churchill's to Powders to

signal a shift from England's traditional culture and history. The laundrette's new title is proudly advertised on the storefront's brightly lit marquee which distinguishes the space from its drab surroundings. The laundrette's new name also serves as a dubious nod to the alternative markets that helped the young entrepreneurs gain the resources needed to begin the transformation of their neighborhood. The modifications to the commercial space eventually change the surrounding area by attracting lines of "real punters" (*Laundrette* 47) that are excited to use Omar and Johnny's service. The success of the laundrette therefore revolutionizes the use and status of the area by revitalizing the neighborhood's economy. Inside of the commercial space, there are also significant changes. During the grand-opening scene, new washers and dryers line the store, the walls are freshly painted, plants adorn the shelves, and a plush seating area has also been added.

The laundrette's new look reflects Omar and Johnny's successful positions as business owners. However, while the two characters have risen in class, they continue to redefine their participation in Thatcherite economics. In particular, the back office is an area where the characters conduct business but also freely practice their sexuality. Later in the grand opening scene, Omar and Johnny undress and make love as their customers wait outside of the store. Nasser and his mistress Rachel simultaneously enter the laundrette's main room and begin waltzing amongst the new posh surroundings. An interior shot of the backroom shows Omar and Johnny intimately embracing while Nasser and Rachel can be seen doing the same action through the office's window. This visual comparison subverts the initial sequence in Nasser's garage since Omar and Johnny are

the ones being intimate in the office. Thus, the laundrette's room symbolizes a space where Omar and Johnny can adhere to capitalist demands but also reject heteronormativity and racial separation. These convivial notions carry on in this scene as the laundrette opens its doors and Johnny smiles into the back-office window where Omar is watching the customers flood in. Here, Johnny and Omar face one another in the window and slowly become one hybrid image

The development of this alternative space is quickly endangered, however, as Nasser attempts to unite his daughter with Omar and ensure that capitalism and heteronormativity survive. Understanding that such a union will bring him more wealth, Omar proposes to Tania despite Johnny being in earshot of the conversation. This love triangle drives Johnny away from an Omar who is quickly turning into the perfect Thatcherite businessman, Later, when Omar confronts Johnny about missing work, he expresses his new perspective on life by stating: "I want big money…When we were at school, you and your lot kicked me all round the place. And what are you doing now? Washing my floor. That's how I like it" (*Laundrette* 51). Despite his ruthless determination to own "an armada of laundrettes" (*Laundrette* 66), Omar quickly discovers that running such an empire is impossible without Johnny's partnership. Towards the end of the film, the importance of the cross-racial allegiance becomes apparent as Johnny's skinhead gang beat up Salim outside of the store. Rather than allow this hate crime to continue, Johnny takes steps to rescue Salim and the laundrette. Genghis and the skinheads quickly overpower Johnny and the white Briton becomes the one being "kicked all around the place." Johnny subsequently endures the same treatment

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Omar once received since both protagonists collectively trouble the sexual, economic, and racial politics of the city. As this scene closes, Omar rushes over to protect Johnny by wrapping his body over his bloodied-partner; an act that ultimately prevents Genghis from killing Johnny with a trashcan. Now out of options, Genghis throws the trashcan through the laundrette's window.

The final sequence shows Omar attending to Johnny's wounds as the broken storefront window can be seen reflecting in the back-office's window. This alignment of images helps symbolize that the racial partnerships and sexuality that occur in the office can now be expressed outside of the laundrette. The smashed window opens the commercial space to the public sphere and allows the characters to openly display their sexuality. For the first time in the film, Omar publicly kisses Johnny in full view of other Londoners. This act of intimacy is brief, yet it signals that the neighborhood's sexual and racial politics have shifted somewhat due to Omar and Johnny's laundrette. The film's end does not reveal if the couple will ultimately be safe and allowed to openly express their love, however, the final scene plays out in the commercial space that has destabilized not only Thatcherite economics but London's dominant sexual and racial norms as well. The laundrette's space helps Omar and Johnny redefine how Londoners can participate and thrive within the neoliberal city. By accessing and profiting from illicit economies, Kureishi's protagonists reveal that alternative, yet unethical, methods for success exist within the imposed system. Moreover, exploring these possibilities allow characters like Omar and Johnny to open the rigid definitions of British citizenship, culture, and sexuality.

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Multicultural Britain's Next Wave of Change

Selvon and Kureishi's texts depict how black Britons use and create alternative

economies that empower London's marginalized communities. By purchasing property in

the metropole, both Moses and Omar establish spaces where black Britons can easily

access services and products that help immigrants change urban areas. The financial

exchanges between different city residents help grow the power of black businesses that

can transform the traditional culture and race relations of the city. The cross-racial

relationships built within and outside of the alternative economies consequently reshape

the way black and white Londoners interact. Therefore, through economic relationships,

black Britons gradually alter sections of the metropole by using their consumer roles to

benefit the progression of a multicultural environment. The success of these efforts is

evident when one considers how different colonial diasporas have shaped areas such as

Brixton or Brick Lane. Cross-racial relationships are frequent within these areas due to

the various stores and restaurants that are frequented by white and black Britons alike.

Multiculturalism is fostered within these economic spaces as London's residents engage

in financial exchanges. While the cosmopolitan identity of the city is strong in these

areas, the fear of immigration continues to loom over London as new populations make

their way to the metropole. Political discussions during the Brexit referendum focused on

immigration and its effect on London's identity. Conservative politicians like Nigel

Farage characterized immigrants and refugees as people that steal jobs and abuse

financial relief programs. Non-white outsiders were also labeled as potential terrorists to

heighten public anxiety and sway voters. Such tactics proved successful, since many

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Britons voted to leave the European Union in hopes of restricting immigration from abroad. These recent developments pose a threat to the development of multicultural London, yet marginal groups can once again find avenues of empowerment by operating within the city's economic system.

Chapter Three

Invisible Women, Precarious Bodies: Female Slaves, Necropolitics, and Agency in London's Shadow Economy in Mende Nazer's *Slave* and Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail*

In September of 2015, the Bank of England reported that half of the UK's banknotes were being used to fund its shadow economy. Included in this illicit market are activities such as drug dealing, prostitution, and human trafficking. These illegal, lucrative practices have been estimated to make up ten percent of the UK's GDP in 2012 (Collinson and Jones). While Britain's shadow economy is less profitable than other European countries like Spain and Italy, the Global North receives its illicit products through the same underground market. The commodities exchanged in these international transactions are not limited to manufactured products. In fact, enslaved people are often included within the shadow economy's supply chain. Developing nations – which include postcolonial countries – in the Global South often supply the human commodities the North demands. The slave trade that flows into Europe is therefore driven by the inequity created by neoliberal practices that exploit cheap labor and bodies from the third world. While the Global North indeed preys upon these disempowered populations, this study focuses on Britain and its former colonies to disclose how this economic relationship sets up new forms of oppression via historical associations. Human trafficking is being tackled by the state, yet contemporary legal measures have not been able to fully prevent the flow of human commodities into Britain's borders. The Modern Slavery Act of 2015 attempted to end trafficking within Britain's borders however there has been a 78% increase in the number of reported cases since the implementation of the

law (Bulman, "Human").[23] This recent figure does not account for the estimated 10,000 –

13,000 slaves that continue to be held captive in Britain's profitable shadow economy

(Bulman, "Human"). The considerable growth of human trafficking throughout the nation

subsequently reveals that current legislation is ineffective when it comes to ending the

modern slave trade and protecting postcolonial groups.

Britain's weak anti-trafficking laws not only harm disempowered populations but

also help to re-create colonial-era inequity and oppression between the state and its

former colonies. Postcolonial people become trafficked into areas like London due to the

North's demand for inexpensive labor and products. Once they cross national borders,

these individuals lose their rights and are exploited by the shadow economy. Today's

slaves look to the state for asylum or citizenship to help them escape their bondage and

commodification. The government's role in deciding whether to protect these victims is a

powerful situation where Britain can choose to reinforce its authority over postcolonial

groups. Many trafficked people arrive in post-imperial London as it has become a hub of

Britain's illicit markets due to its colonial history, financial markets, and cosmopolitan

population. Slaves in the former metropole are subsequently in danger of economic and

sexual exploitation by the city's shadow market. It is important to recognize, however,

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[23] Britain's Modern Slavery Act (MAS) of 2015 was the first piece of legislation aimed at preventing modern slavery and protecting its victims. By consolidating existing human trafficking and slavery laws, the MSA creates a more developed approach to country's forced labor issue. Critics of the legislation such as members of Anti-Slavery International and the Human Trafficking Foundation agree that the act does not provide victims enough protection or resources to prevent them from returning to the industry. This last point is discussed in-depth within the chapter as it relates to female victims of the modern slave trade.

that half of the overall migrant population is female and this community experiences different hazards and forms of oppression than their male counterparts (Munck 1233). Postcolonial women are more frequently targeted for trafficking as they are further disadvantaged in their nations due to neoliberal practices that maximize profits and eliminate social welfare programs. Without access to education, job training, or property women from the developing world are left exposed to the demands of a globalized capitalist patriarchal system that is dominated by European interests. Females that are trafficked to areas like London consequently find themselves dominated by both a former empire's shadow economy and its legal system.

Mende Nazer's *Slave* (2003) and Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail* (2006) both illustrate the dangerous conditions that female slaves from postcolonial nations endure as they are captured, abused, and then transported to the post-imperial city. Nazer's memoir details how she was enslaved in her native Sudan and then continued a life of forced domestic servitude for the nation's ambassador in London. Abani's novella provides another perspective of human trafficking by showing how a young Nigerian girl is taken to the former metropole to become a sex slave. While Mende and Abigail are able to escape their captivity, they both continue to face a life of precarity in the city as the state pushes these victims back into the shadow market via ineffective trafficking laws and social programs. *Slave* and *Becoming Abigail* not only show how economic and political forces exploit third-world women in the slave trade, but also how Britain's anti-trafficking laws and programs reify its power over postcolonial female bodies by

continuing to harm them even after liberation.[24] To expand upon this latter claim, Achille

Mbembe's concept of necropolitics helps explain how Mende and Abigail continue to be

oppressed and denied their rights for the benefit of the state. However, despite this lethal

form of subjugation, both women are able to locate liberating – yet problematic – forms

of agency that undermine the state's power while also reclaiming possession over their

bodies. This line of inquiry subsequently delves into matters about gender, representation,

and marginality that are explored in Gayatri Spivak's investigations of the subaltern.

Economics, Globalization, and the Modern Slave Trade

Slavery has taken on different manifestations and characteristics throughout

various centuries and parts of the world. Chattel slavery, which is also referred to as

"classical" or "old" slavery due to its roots in ancient times, is what Dan R. Frost

describes as "the most extreme form of unfree labor" where the master "not only controls

the slave's labor, but owns the laborer as well" (181). People in this form of servitude are

the property of their master including any children they produce. Laws guarantee an

owner certain rights over her chattel including the ability to sell or punish slaves yet

executing or freeing these people sometimes requires judicial approval (Frost 182).

Chattel slavery thrived most recently in areas such as the American South and European

colonies. While this form of slavery has legally ended due to revolutions and abolitionist

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[24] In this chapter, I am focusing on how state's apparatuses such as weak laws and anti-trafficking programs continue to do harm to former victims of the slave trade. To be clear, I am not arguing that the state has agreed to pass legislation or create treaties between other nations to allow trafficking to occur.

movements in the 18th and 19th centuries, other forms of unfree labor continue to exist. Christopher Cumo notes that debt peonage is one system that subsists in the modern era where "a creditor compels another person to work for him or her until the debtor, whether peon or third party, repays the debt" (449). Sometimes the debtor can provide another person or relative to the creditor as a peon to cover the work or payment that is owed. If, however the balance is not repaid, the debtor or peon must endure a lifetime of servitude which is "a circumstance that is tantamount to slavery" (Cumo 449). Debt peonage differs from chattel slavery as the debtor is able to gain freedom by paying off what is due to a creditor. Moreover, debtors or their children do not belong to a master like property. This form of unpaid labor existed internationally in the 20th century in areas like the post-abolition American South, 1930s Liberia, and in Japan from the 1980s to the present with mafia prostitution rings (Cumo 450).

Another form of forced labor was the encomienda system which was practiced by the Spanish in the New World starting in the 16th century. As Lynne Guitar explains "the Spanish crown used local administrators to commend a group of Indians, vassals of the crown, to a particular Spaniard, the encomendero, in reward for his service" (250). This practice was based upon European concepts of patriarchy and feudal obligations that essentially provided Spain with low-paid labor and additional Catholic citizens from the New World. Guitar asserts that while Native people were under the watch of an encomendero, the "Spaniards did not own the Indians" as the indigenous people were paid for their work and were not sold or rented as property (250). Consequently, the encomienda system was not slavery yet it was an "exploitive, repressive, and isolating"

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(Guitar 250) process that sought to convert Natives to Spanish and Christian customs via forceful means. To curb the power of growing encomendero class, the Spanish crown put an end to the system in 1542. These various kinds of forced or unpaid labor display how the term slavery can be applied to practices that impose different forms of oppression yet do not always equate to the same process.

While there have been several forms of slavery before the 21st century, critics are now attempting to define and distinguish "modern slavery" and its various manifestations. Kevin Bales emphasizes that contemporary slavery is different from past forms of the practice as it seeks to make the highest profit possible while also incurring the lowest cost to keep its victims alive. Slaves are therefore treated like expendable commodities that are rapidly and frequently replaced to guarantee maximum earnings. This unique practice comes as a result of the world's population tripling after World War II. Poorer areas of the world such as Southeast Asia, South America, Africa, Arab countries, and the Indian subcontinent have seen an immense growth of slavery as resources and work opportunities are scarce for their growing populations (Bales 12). This situation has created a surplus of available slaves that make these potential victims cheap and disposable unlike the slaves of the American South that were treated as chattel or "valuable livestock" (Bales 15). Modern slaves are not bred, given medical care, or chased after to save their masters money. Rather, enslaved people today have short-term and brutal relationships with their owners as it is "cheaper to let them die" (Bales 15) then pay for their upkeep like slavers did in the American South or European colonies.

This brutal treatment of the human body is how Bales distinguishes modern slavery from previous forms of bondage.

> Slavery is a booming business and the number of slaves is increasing. People get rich by using slaves. And when they are finished with their slaves, they just throw these people away. This is the new slavery, which focuses on big profits and cheap lives. It is not about controlling people in the traditional sense of old slavery, but about controlling them completely. People become completely disposable tools for making money. (4)

The expendability of the modern slave, coupled with the capitalist drive for profit, places the trafficked body in an ever-increasingly precarious position. The shift from "slave owner" to "slave holder" has also augmented the dangers of the modern trade (Bales 5). In the past, a slave owner would legally possess another person and oftentimes kept documents that validated this ownership. However, as slavery became outlawed everywhere, the legal aspect of the trade was eliminated. Slave holders therefore now have total control over their people and no longer have to abide by regulations or keep records of their captives (Bales 5) like masters did in the chattel system. Outside of Bales definition of contemporary slavery, Joel Quirk adds that defining present forms of forced labor is problematic as individual experience "can sometimes make it difficult to draw a clear-cut distinction between modern slavery and other forms of exploitive activities" (331). Migration however is one characteristic that Quirk identifies as being connected to contemporary systems of slavery as people seeking better economic or social opportunities can become entrapped by global trafficking rings. Therefore, as Quirk claims, "while kidnapping and other forms of direct compulsion are not unheard of, most victims of modern slavery migrate voluntarily" (341). Women from postcolonial nations often seek out the economic, educational, or cultural opportunities that can be provided in

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the Global North. A majority of female migrants in search of a better life are preyed upon by relatives or acquaintances that have connections to trafficking rings or smuggling routes (Barberán Reinares 93). Such is the case in Abani's novella where Abigail's uncle lures her to London for better educational opportunities yet forces her into sexual slavery once in the city. Once trafficked into different countries via ground, sea, or air transport, migrant women are put in the hands of recruiters that take away their passports so escape is nearly impossible. Going to the authorities for help is not always an option for these undocumented women as they can be deported or arrested for entering into their new country or working as prostitutes. Returning to their home nations can place disempowered women back into smuggling rings and the process of trafficking begins once again (Barberán Reinares 93). Overall, there is no singular method used to recruit or transport women into the shadow economies of the North, yet Nazer and Abani's texts illustrate two different ways in which female bodies are trafficked from postcolonial areas to post-imperial London. Despite the difficulty in defining the characteristics and creation of contemporary slavery "classical" slavery; bonded labor; forced prostitution; exploitation of domestic workers; forced labor for the state; and wartime enslavement (Quirk 338) are all practices that still exist in the modern era. Within this study, both female protagonists migrate from their homelands and eventually become victims of modern slavery. Nazer becomes a slave in the "classical" sense while Abigail is forced into prostitution. Despite the different forms oppression these women experience, their stories help reveal how modern slavery, power, and economics functions between the Global North and South.

States add to the tribulations of the slave trade by not having adequate anti-trafficking legislation or recovery programs for escaped victims. For instance, in 2016 the National Referral Mechanism disclosed that there were almost 1,400 reports of human trafficking in Britain (Bulman, "Victims"). While these individuals were able to flee from their captivity, the state only provided them with a minimum of 45 days of support that included accommodation, medical care, and counseling (Bulman, "Victims"). The resources allotted to escaped slaves are part of Britain's Modern Slavery Act (MSA) of 2015 which was the first piece of legislation aimed at preventing modern slavery and protecting its victims. By joining existing human trafficking and slavery laws from both the UK and European Union, the MSA created a more developed approach to the country's forced labor issue. Stronger penalties for trafficking make up the bulk of the act and include "new civil orders to enable the courts to place restrictions on those convicted of modern slavery offences" and a "provision for new child trafficking advocates" (Gay and Lipscombe). The formation of the independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner position is also included in the act to help to "encourage good practice on the prevention on modern slavery offences and the identification of victims" (Gay and Lipscombe). Critics of the legislation like Anti-Slavery International and the Human Trafficking Foundation agree that the act does not provide victims enough protection or resources to prevent them from returning to the industry. Accordingly, May Bulman of *The Independent* recently noted in 2017 that Britain only offers two weeks accommodation in a "safe house" for people who are waiting to be identified as escaped slaves ("Victims"). This

length of time is not sufficient enough for individuals to become acclimated to a new country or a different way of life after they are freed. The quality of this housing is another issue that needs to be addressed with respect to ending the modern trade. Lara Bundock of the Snowdrop Project – a charity in Britain that helps trafficking victims – acknowledges that these mistreated people are "living in accommodation that is not in a fit state" (Bulman, "Victims"). Safe housing is also far from support bases that are provided by the government or local charities. Receiving psychological care is therefore difficult if a victim is not able to easily reach these areas. While the MSA does indeed give former slaves unique protection and services that are not given to undocumented immigrants, the substandard aid increases trafficked people's chances of becoming homeless, addicted to drugs, or entering into an abusive relationship. Such a situation occurs in Abani's text as the protagonist becomes engaged in an intimate and pedophilic relationship with her exploitive social worker. The inadequate care given to former slaves ultimately puts this population at an increased risk of being returned to the shadow market or into the hands of traffickers (Bulman, "Victims").

The UK's asylum process is another obstacle that escaped slaves must overcome to guarantee their safety. Originally, the UK's treatment of asylum cases was governed by the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which helped settle the thousands of people that were displaced due to World War II (Pirouet 10). Louise Pirouet notes that this Convention helped set the framework for the UK's modern asylum practices as it ensured that future laws would "protect them [threatened people] from unfair and discriminatory treatment, give them a guarantee of equality before the

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law, enable them to travel, and encourage countries to grant naturalization (10). However,

since the Convention only applied to those displaced before 1951, the legislation itself

has been changed to widen the scope of populations that can receive such rights. The UK

in turn has interpreted and developed its own system for asylum which continues to

evolve in modern times. The Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999 was implemented to

help process a large backlog of asylum applications in a more expedient manner. The act

ensured that "most cases will be decided within six months" and also provided that

aslyees would be given vouchers instead of welfare benefits and no-choice

accommodations ("Immigration and Asylum Act 1999"). The Nationality, Immigration,

and Asylum Act of 2002 would add another stipulation to the asylum process by

implementing the Life in the United Kingdom test for any person seeking naturalization

or permanent residence in the UK. The Home Office described the test as an "effort to

help people integrate and share in British values and traditions" by assessing if they had

adequate knowledge about British culture and the English language ("New UK

Citizenship Testing Starts"). The original test, however, was criticized as it contained

factual errors about UK history which have been corrected in subsequent years.[25]

Moreover, citizenship assessments such as these are problematic since simply knowing

historical facts does not guarantee that an individual will abide by a nation's laws or

constructed culture. 2006 would bring changes to The Nationality, Immigration, and

Asylum Act by adding more requirements such as document submissions and heavier

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[25] For a list of these errors, see the 29 April 2006 article "Citizenship Guide Fails Its
History Exam" in *The Guardian* by Lee Glendinning.

penalties for applicants that did follow the screening protocols. Most notably, the 2006 version limited the right for an appeal to aslyees that were seeking a review based on human rights or racial discrimination reasons. Dependents, visitors, and students were consequently disallowed from challenging their rejected applications from the Home Office ("Immigration, Asylum, and Nationality Act 2006"). Such a change in the 2006 act signals how the UK Government was beginning to become more restrictive about the asylum process, seeking to punish those that did not abide by the system's rules. In more recent years, refugees and undocumented people from Afghanistan, Syria and Eritrea have had to deal with the growing tension over immigration as they try to settle in the UK. For example, displaced populations from France's Calais refugee camp have been disallowed from claiming asylum in the UK since under European Union law, "asylum seekers should claim asylum in the first safe country they come to" ("What Happens To Asylum Seekers?"). Protection for persecuted people such as these political refugees is subsequently being restricted by the UK. The recent Brexit decision in 2016 has added more obstacles to the asylum process as EU laws will slowly be supplanted by forthcoming legislation. Mike Penrose of UNICEF UK notes that the upcoming Brexit asylum changes will specifically "risk the ability to get children fleeing war and persecution to the safety of their family in the UK" (Elgot). Thus, with the elimination of EU laws, the UK will be able to further restrict who is allowed to settle within its borders and ultimately claim citizenship.

A series of interviews, screenings, and document submissions are currently necessary for applicants to claim asylum in the UK. While formerly trafficked people are

given the opportunity to remain in their new country, the eligibility requirements for asylum do not easily conform to the lived experiences of slaves. For example, the process requires asylum seekers to "apply when you arrive in the UK or as soon as you think it would be unsafe for you to return to your own country. Your application is more likely to be denied if you wait" ("Claim Asylum" 1). This stipulation is difficult to abide by for a trafficked person as their bodies are controlled by a handler or owner as soon as they enter the U.K. This issue was present in 2002 when Nazer's application for asylum was partially rejected by the Home Office since she made her case only months after she escaped and became aware that there even was such a process. Another issue that prevents trafficked people from claiming asylum is the question of persecution. Race, religion, nationality, and political opinion can all be reasons an applicant requests protection in the UK, yet the process of trafficking does not easily fit into these four conditions ("Claim Asylum" 2). People trapped in the industry are not always targeted due to specific traits or beliefs but instead simply because they are available for trafficking. Even in cases like Nazer's where enslavement was based on religion, indigeneity, and gender, the Home Office can overlook these points and still reject a request for protection. This was another problem Nazer faced in the asylum process in 2002 as the state ignored the various ways in which her marginalized body was targeted for enslavement despite the existing UK legislation that would make her eligible for aid. The asylum document's final reason for requesting protection is as "anything else that puts you at risk because the social, cultural, religious or political situation in your country" ("Claim Asylum" 2). While this condition is rather open for interpretation,

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Nazer's case was also denied as the Home Office did not think the Sudanese government would persecute her if she returned to her home country. This decision was based on the diplomatic relations between the countries and overlooked the fact that Nazer had published a widely-sold memoir that denounced Sudan's treatment of the Nuba people. The asylum process also requests that applicants submit passports, travel documents, police registration certificates, or identity cards during their screening to help their case be processed ("Claim Asylum" 2-3). Once again, trafficked people can fail to abide by the Home Office's regulations as slaves often have their passports and personal identification taken or destroyed by their masters. Or, if a slave escapes captivity, there may not be time to collect the necessary paperwork to properly claim asylum. By offering substandard protection and anti-trafficking laws for slaves, the shadow economy is able to stay stocked with a steady supply of women, and the state does not have to protect postcolonial people. If former slaves were granted citizenship by the state, these individuals would have a better chance of surviving after they are liberated or escape. However, by denying these stateless groups their rights, Britain puts these people in lethal situations and reintroduces colonial power relationships that deny subjugated groups their humanity and freedom.

Outside of its legal system, Britain's economic power helps it direct the flow of human commodities from South to North and reinforce its control over postcolonial nations. The state's National Referral Mechanism identifies that reported victims of the trade have come from 102 different countries (Bulman, "Human"). While nations like Albania, China, and Romania can be classified as "developing" due to their economic

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status, some like Nigeria, Sudan, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are also postcolonial ("National Referral Mechanism Statistics 2016"). The movement of slaves from these countries to Britain reveals that colonization has had a hand in forming the nations that export slaves. In fact, the aftermath of empire ensures that a steady supply of human slaves will continue to flow from these areas after their independence. Accordingly, Delia Amir and Karen Beeks recognize that postcolonial nations help maintain the global trade since

> exporting countries or regions are peripherally located: mostly poverty ridden, dependent on resources from center, even for their meager survival. At times, the people's experiences of powerlessness and hopelessness is related also to the weakness of the state and its governing apparatuses, which enhance and contribute to the commerce in humans. (xiii)

Postcolonial states subsequently adhere to the economic and political demands of European countries that gained their authority via empire. Although the era of colonization may have ended, Britain still retains control over its former colonies by taking advantage of imbalanced financial relationships. Laura Barberán Reinares recognizes this inequity in the era of decolonization and argues that postcolonial nations are "utterly indebted and now subjected to the demands of global finance capital, the latest (more sanitized) form of colonization" (91). Without stable economies or governments, people from these areas seek out job opportunities or markets that will help them either reach Britain or supply it with a valuable commodity. The global slave trade provides this opportunity however marginalized groups that migrate – both involuntarily and voluntarily – from their countries become entangled in trafficking circles. Nazer and Abani's texts illustrate this situation as it occurs in Africa by depicting how the profits

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from trafficking drive fellow citizens to sell one another into bondage. Specifically, these narratives highlight how women in Sudan and Nigeria have become prime targets for slave sellers – mainly men – in the postcolonial era. Poverty, limited opportunities at home, lack of education, unstable political conditions, and war characterize areas where women are more likely to be abducted and sold into trafficking rings that feed the global demand (Unseen UK). These conditions are prevalent in Sudan and Nigeria as both nations struggle to stabilize after the exit of the British Empire. In fact, the United Nations' humanitarian coordinator Stephen O'Brien stated in 2017 that these postcolonial countries are part of "the world's largest humanitarian crisis since 1945" due to extreme famine, poverty, and conflict (Sparks).[26] The National Referral Mechanism's statistics further reveal the damage colonization has created as Nigeria ranks fourth on the list of trafficking victims identified in Britain. Sudan is not far behind in position as it is eleventh on the record ("National Referral Mechanism Statistics") and accounts for the nation with the highest percentage increase of referrals in 2016 (Bulman, "Human"). As the disparity between the North and South continues to grow, inhabitants of these marginal countries also consider moving to Britain for a higher standard of living or a better education yet "those migrating to the West, encompass an ever-increasing number of women, many of whom are being trafficked" (Barberán Reinares 91). Consequently, the wealth and power that Britain gained from its empire has helped to created global

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[26] Somalia and Yemen are the other two countries that are part of this modern humanitarian crisis.

economic inequality and provide the environment for a slave trade that effects women in postcolonial countries.

To Live and Let Die: Bio-politics in the Shadow Economy

Michel Foucault argues that in the classical age sovereign power was exercised by the "right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself" (*History* 136). In this sense, rulers deducted possessions or rights from subjects to display their control. The definitive expression of power came with the "right of death" (*History* 136) which signaled the sovereign's complete dominion over an individual's life. Modern power, however, no longer substantiates its authority by killing but by focusing on the extension, preservation, and improvement of life. Foucault claims that this era is defined by bio-power or the sovereign's use "of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" (*History* 140). The power over life developed in the 17th century by two interconnected basic forms: discipline and regulation. The first "centered on the body as a machine" (*History* 139) that needed to be disciplined and optimized to ensure that it provided its maximum economic productivity. Regulation came later, and this form saw the body as being "imbued [with] the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological process" (*History* 139). To keep the body safe and capable of reproducing, numerical data was gathered about life expectancy, birth rates, and propagation. Foucault asserts that both forms worked together to develop capitalism by inserting disciplined bodies into the workforce and regulating biological processes for the sake of economic development (*History* 139).

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Therefore, by fostering and prolonging life, sovereigns demonstrated their political power over their subjects while also growing the state's economic capabilities.

Mbembe calls into question Foucault's concept of bio-politics since it fails to address how contemporary states substantiate their authority by murdering or harming certain populations. For Mbembe, "the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die (11). Modern states employ the right to kill more often due to global wars, terrorism, and resistance against invading forces (imagined or real). Mbembe consequently draws attention to how state politics are increasingly concerned with exterminating life rather than fostering its existence.[27] Despite this difference, Mbembe sides with Foucault when he acknowledges that "race has been the ever-present shadow in Western political thought and practice, especially when it comes to imagining inhumanity of, or rule over, foreign peoples" (17). The construction of race, according to Foucault, helps a sovereign function politically and identify "the break between who must live and what must die" (*Society* 254). Races that are outside of the state's citizenry or pose a threat to its authority are therefore killed or made to suffer "every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on" (Foucault, *Society* 253). For instance, refugees, undocumented immigrants, and stateless people can be killed by the state due in

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[27] I recognize that Mbembe uses Agamben's thoughts on the state of exception and Nazi concentration camps to form his concept of necropolitics. However, I focus here on Mbembe's idea as it better fits the discussion of human slavery, the shadow market, and state power.

part to their racial differences. Nazer and Abani's work speak to this issue by portraying how postcolonial women are marked as Other because of their foreign characteristics and marginal positioning. Mende and Abigail's dark skin, African nationality, and undocumented status place them outside of Britain's body politic. While indeed there are various races, ethnicities, and nationalities included within Britain's citizenry, the migrants in these texts are considered racialized bodies that do not belong to the nation due their undocumented and unwanted status. Consequently, being a racialized non-citizen leave both protagonists with minimal rights and protection. The state subsequently allows Mende and Abigail's bodies to be exposed to death in London's shadow economy so sovereign power can be enforced.

Racism plays a major role in defining who will be subject to state violence. However, there are other characteristics that are interconnected with race that make Othered populations increasingly susceptible to death. Gender is one such factor that Mbembe overlooks when discussing necropolitics. As noted earlier, undocumented or stateless women are subjected to higher levels of physical and sexual violence when they inhabit foreign nations. The combination of racism and patriarchy therefore elevates the risk female slaves face. This situation invites academics to rethink conversations about human rights in regard to women that the state sees as being disposable. Accordingly, Judith Butler takes up this issue when she questions "*what makes a life grievable*" (*Precarious Bodies* 20; original emphasis)*?* Global conflicts and violence surely destroy bodies, but Butler claims that political forces dictate which populations are valuable and should be mourned. When considering what factors endanger a body, Butler stresses that

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"women and minorities, including sexual minorities, are, as a community, subjected to violence, exposed to its possibility, if not its realization" (*Precarious Bodies* 20). This social circumstance helps to reinforce the notion that discussions about necropolitics need to include gender if we are to fully understand how states implement their right to kill, divide humanity, and uphold their authority.[28] As noted previously, women that are trapped in the shadow economy face different forms of oppression than males due to their gender and more vulnerable status. Nazer and Abigail's texts therefore present us with a factual and fictional narrative that illustrates how marginalized women are exploited by the slave trade and continue to be oppressed after their liberation via state apparatuses.

In addition to gender being absent in Mbembe's discussion of necropolitics, the question of female agency is another topic that is overlooked. Marginalized women are enslaved and trapped by global economic forces however they are able to resist their subjugation by using different forms of bodily communication. Within the later sections of this chapter, Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern helps discuss how subjugated women like Nazer and Abigail use their bodies as tools to "speak" out against or terminate the state's mistreatment of escaped slaves. Rather than allow themselves to be eliminated by the shadow economy or the British government, both protagonists employ strategies to liberate their bodies and draw attention to their power.

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[28] Sexuality – along with other factors – is yet another facet that needs to be considered when augmenting the definition of necropolitics. While I do not include it within this essay, I note its importance in the larger discussion of this discourse.

Forced Labor, Liberation, and Subaltern Speaking in Slave

  Mende Nazer's *Slave* belongs to a growing genre of contemporary literature in the West that exposes the plight experienced by victims of the modern slave trade. These various texts have been classified as slave narratives and are first-hand accounts from people from all over the world about different forms of servitude such as domestic slavery, prostitution, child soldiering, debt bondage, and other types of unpaid labor. Previously, Frederick Douglas and Oladuah Equiano were the two of the most famous voices of the genre during the trans-Atlantic slave trade era. Modern slave narratives, however, differ from these older accounts as they detail how contemporary globalization, economics, poverty, and war have become intertwined with slavery. Before Nazer's famous 2003 publication, there were two prominent modern slave narratives that depicted the dehumanizing conditions of forced labor: Zana Muhsen's *A Story of Modern-Day Slavery* (1991) and Jean-Robert Cadet's *Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle-Class American* (1998). These texts helped revive the genre while also inadvertently creating a market for this type of text in the West. In 2003, Nazer's *Slave* and Francis Bok's *Escape from Slavery* were both published and described how slavery was thriving in Sudan during the nation's Civil War. These two accounts were soon followed by many more publications that provided different descriptions of human captivity and liberation.[29] Interestingly, a majority of these modern slave narratives are written by

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[29] Some of the more prominent slave narratives that followed Nazer's publication are: China Keitetsi's *Child Soldier* (2004), Grace Akallo's *Girl Soldier* (2007), Ishmael Beah's *Long Way Gone* (2008), Emmanuel Jal's *War Child* (2010), Tina Okpara's *My Life has a Price* (2012), Fatima Boscaro's *Esclavé á 11 ans* (2012), Sophie Hayes Trafficked (2013), Stela Brinzeanu's *Bessarabian Nights* (2014), and Megan Stephen's

authors from Africa or its diaspora.[30] Such an occurrence like this invites inquiry as to

why this region has become targeted for these specific stories. Laura T. Murphy explains

this development by claiming that "people in the West gravitate to images of slavery that

depict people of African descent as its victims because of the West's history of racialized

slavery" (97). While I strongly agree with Murphy's argument, I would add that modern

slave narratives from Africa are popular since they provide Western audiences with

"exotic" stories from the third-world that can confirm popular stereotypes (created by the

West) about race, nationality, gender, and religion – particularly Islam. These books are

consequently marketable to readers of the Global North that are searching for fodder for

conservative, capitalist, neoliberal, or pro-Christian agendas.[31] Another issue with the

growing market of modern slave narratives is authorship and authenticity. Often, texts

like Nazer's are co-written or translated by a Western author, journalist, abolitionist, or

political group that can embed their own agenda into these narratives. *Slave* was co-

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Bought and Sold (2015). It is important to note that many of these texts were co-written
with a European author or translator. This situation and its political complexities also
occur in Nazer's *Slave*.

[30] Titles of white slave narratives include Sophie Hayes *Trafficked* (2013), Stela
Brinzeanu's *Bessarabian Nights* (2014), and Megan Stephen's *Bought and Sold* (2015).
Intriguingly, these texts were all published more recently and deal with white European
women being trafficked within Europe.

[31] I recognize this is an on-going issue within the genre's field, yet my interest in *Slave*
looks to how the state exposes female slaves to death via laws or government agencies.
For a more in-depth discussion about how modern slave narratives are being co-opted by
religious or political organizations, see "Blackface Abolition and the New Slave
Narrative" by Laura T. Murphy in the *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary
Inquiry*.

written by journalist Damien Lewis who translated Nazer's story into English for the publication of the memoir. I take up this matter later in my analysis of the text to question why European voices are needed to help persuade the state to grant former slaves their rights. This genre is consequently entwined with different problems that affect how a marginalized voice can be co-opted or perhaps silenced for the sake of book sales or political goals. While previous studies have investigated these issues, this analysis is explores how Nazer's text describes how commodified women are denied rights and protection by the state after they escape the slave trade. *Slave* shows how the British government denies Nazer asylum and decides to send her back to Sudan. These moments in the narrative expose how a slave, specifically an African woman, is denied the proper treatment by a state that seeks to reify its sovereignty by pushing her back into the shadow market. However, it is only when white-allies or Western voices exclaim concern or "speak" for Nazer that she is considered human and worth protection. Investigating this real-life occurrence shows not only how the slave trade targets postcolonial women, but also how Britain shapes this market and sustains its existence by pushing marginalized female bodies closer to death.

In comparison to other modern slave narratives, *Slave* focuses on how Mende Nazer is forced into domestic servitude in South Sudan and how her oppression continues as she is loaned to another master in London. This last point is what makes Nazer's text unique as it illustrates how the author remains a commodity in a global shadow economy that flows into the North. Other slave narratives such as Jal's *War Child*, Dirie's *Desert Flower,* and Hayes' *Trafficked* also show how London is a hub of the human trafficking

economy, yet these texts fail to describe the complexities of attaining asylum status and

protection in the post-imperial city. By not discussing the issues associated with asylum,

these slave narratives neglect how Britain exercises its power within the domain of

human slavery and economics. *Slave* however helps illustrate how disempowered African

women are mistreated and exploited not only in the post-imperial city but also in their

native countries. Depicting how female bodies are sites of gendered violence and abuse

helps show how this disempowered population becomes vulnerable to the economic

demands of the global slave trade. The initial chapters of Nazer's memoir mainly focus

on her childhood which was spent in a rural village in the Nuba Mountains of South

Sudan. While her community is a part of the larger national population, they are looked

down upon by other citizens due to their darker complexion, lower economic status, and

indigenous cultural practices. This form of discrimination is first described by Nazer's

father as he compares how *Hawajas* or "white men" from the United States are "very

good people" for sending food and water to their village yet "Arabs don't help us – even

though they share the same country with us" (15). In this instance, Americans –

especially President George H. Bush – are venerated by the Nuba for providing resources

during a drought period. Although simply characterizing the United States as a

benevolent force is problematic, Nazer's fellow country people are indeed the individuals

that enslave and abuse her body.[32] Arab raiders set fire to the Nuba's homes and begin to

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[32] I acknowledge that the United States – and most of the West – have caused turmoil in
areas like Sudan for political or economic reasons. However, instead of critiquing the
depiction of the U.S. in *Slave*, I choose to look at how Nazer is discriminated against by
her own country people to reveal how she is perceived to be inferior and open to
commodification.

murder elders and kidnap the village's children. This scene is recounted by the author in

gruesome detail to emphasize how violence is brought upon the rural community despite

sharing a nationality and religion with the *Mujahedeen*. "But why were these men now

shouting 'Allah Akhbar' after burning our village, raping, and killing? Did they think it

was halal to do this? We were Muslims, just like them. So how could they think this?

(100).

Nazer's mistreatment continues as she is taken away from her village to be sold

into slavery. Sexual abuse becomes part of her dehumanization as her male captor

continually rapes her during her first night away from home.

> I was pinned down and I couldn't breathe, as he pushed himself onto me…Then
> he started to force my legs apart. Each time I tried to push them together again, he
> hit me hard around the face…He was trying to force himself inside me, but
> because of my circumcision he couldn't seem to manage it. (102 – 103)

Nazer describes the brutal process of enslavement to highlight how the female body is

traumatized even at an early age in Sudan. The graphic narration of this moment is

unique as it does not shirk away from noting how the male captor physically dominates

Nazer to make her submit to the demands of the human trafficking industry. In this way,

the memoir's narration helps Nazer re-claim a form of power by divulging how her body

is abused and condemning these actions. The other kidnapped girls from the village suffer

a similar experience that night as they are also treated as sexual objects by the Arab

raiders. After being subjected to such severe abuse, the Nuba girls are transported to

Khartoum to be sold into slavery. This begins the author's commodification and

movement North by way of the global slave trade. An upper-class Muslim family

purchase the girl to be their domestic servant and quickly begin to assert their supremacy

over her. Rahab, the wife, commands Nazer to do various tasks around the home including childcare, cooking, and cleaning. Her servitude begins early in the morning and does not end even after her masters' family has gone to sleep. Much of her time is spent in isolation as she is not allowed to eat or even be around the family. When she tries to play with the family's children, Nazer is beaten and told not never to touch anyone since she is considered filthy and inferior. This form of cruelty brings her to feel as if they "were treating [her] like an animal. Worse than an animal: even dogs were patted and stroked" (148). She is even made to live in a small shack outside the main home that is kept locked throughout the night. Additionally, rather than call her by her name, Rahab simply addresses Nazer as *yebit* or "girl worthy of no name" (139). These dehumanizing measures gradually destroy her humanity and all hope of liberation. Even the ability to pray is taken away from her as Rahab declares that "Islam isn't for black people like you" (17) and prevents her from ever worshipping Allah again. Throughout her captivity in Sudan, Nazer is mistreated by different communities due to her gender, race, and class status.

As a commodified body, Nazer becomes entrapped in the larger global flow of slaves. While her master lives in Sudan, Rahab is able to exercise her authority as slaveholder and loan Nazer out as if she is an everyday household product. The author's next destination is London as Rahab has arranged to give her to the acting Sudanese Ambassador. Even though Nazer's servitude to Rahab abruptly ends, the slaveholder has already purchased another girl as a substitute. Nanu is also from a Nuba village and has suffered the same abusive initiation process as Nazer. The girl was kidnapped from her

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village by Arab raiders and raped multiple times before being sold in Khartoum. Rahab's ability to easily purchase and replace her slaves illustrates how the trade continues to prey upon the same disempowered groups. Additionally, Nanu's introduction into forced labor and Nazer's movement North demonstrates how these marginalized and commodified bodies can easily be transported throughout the world. Large metropolitan cities like London are a part of this interconnected economy as they also thrive on the unpaid labor slaves produce. Nazer is provided the paperwork necessary to travel to the former metropole as Rahab's family has powerful connections via Al Koronky, the acting Sudanese Ambassador. Surprisingly, the teenage slave arrives in London without any problems despite her inability to speak English or even understand how a complex airport like Heathrow functions. Nazer's movement into London's slave industry is helped along by one of her new master's employees that picks her up from the airport. The handler delivers Nazer to her new confinement in the city without an issue as the slave trade goes unnoticed by the state's authorities. The ease by which Nazer moves across national borders and navigates different cities ultimately reveals how successful the slave trade is in transporting its products.

Once in London, Nazer is taken into the home of Al Koronky, and she begins her "soul destroying life of drudgery once more" (269). Her new master is described as "the most important man at the Embassy" (268) as he has taken charge of the office while the appointed ambassador has returned to Sudan. It is important to note that the political connection between Koronky and Britain does not sway him from relinquishing control over Nazer. Instead, the acting ambassador continues to allow the slave's oppression

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despite his close association with the state. This same political connection later drives

Britain to deny the fact that the Sudanese government actively enslaves Nuba people

when Nazer applies for asylum. Therefore, states that profit from the modern slave trade

absolve one another from allowing this illicit economy to occur. Nazer's exploitation

begins once again as she is controlled by the political official's wife, Hanan. To ensure

that her slave will not escape, Hanan takes away Nazer's passport so she cannot use her

document to leave the country or seek out aid. Such a practice is common among

slaveholders who want to insure complete control over their property. Nazer's new

master also intimidates her by divulging that one of their former slaves was never found

after she fled the Koronky's house. As Hanan explains, Khayria "just disappeared. Either

someone murdered her or she was lost in this huge, dangerous city" (274).[33] The

ambiguous ending to this slave's life pushes Nazer further into submission as she

identifies how helpless she has become even in a metropolitan city of the North.

Ultimately, years of dehumanizing treatment brings Nazer to consider suicide as a

form of liberation. She explains that "killing myself seemed a much better alternative to

staying alive" (279). Similarly, Abigail from Abani's text has the same perspective about

death and its liberating power. Both slaves therefore identify how suicide provides an

outlet for agency and the ability to recover control over the body. Fortunately for Nazer,

she is able to escape enslavement with the help of the Sudanese community in London.

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[33] Towards the end of *Slave*, it is revealed that the Koronky's previous domestic servant escaped from the Sudanese family's home in London and later applied for asylum. Unlike Nazer who was helped by Lewis and other European allies, this woman's asylum case continued to be reviewed.

She flees from the Koronky's home and is driven away from the Willesden Green

neighborhood by an acquaintance. Despite the author's escape, she continues to face an

uncertain future as the State determines whether she will be provided asylum. Nazer's

Slave therefore not only exposes how disempowered women become commodified by the

global slave trade, but it also reveals the difficulties this group faces as they attempt to

reclaim their rights. Initially, Nazer's chances of staying in England are limited by the

fact that she does not comprehend the English language, the process of asylum or even

understand the term since she had "never even heard the word before" (319). These

initial problems illustrate how difficult it can be for a former slave from the Global South

to understand the language and legal constructions of the North. Subsequently, receiving

asylum and rights is a difficult process for female bodies that have exited the global

shadow economy. These preliminary issues were tied to the Home Office's denial of

Nazer's asylum request that began in 2000. After two years of deliberation, the State

ruled in 2002 that being imprisoned and forced into unpaid labor did not "constitute

persecution" (Leigh, "Escaping Slavery"). Refusing to recognize Nazer's slavery as a

valid human rights violation subsequently discloses how the State did not clearly

disapprove or understand the modern slave trade and its practices at this time. Perhaps

with the passing of the MSA in 2015 the state has clearer indications of how trafficking

works and affects migrant women. Slavery cases like Nazer's may have helped to

augment the boundaries of asylum eligibility that can be included in modern

understanding of "fear of persecution" ("Claiming Asylum in the UK"). The Home

Office also undermined Nazer's credibility and suffering by arguing that she should

"have sought asylum as soon as she set foot in Britain" (Leigh, "Escaping Slavery") if she truly needed protection. This sort of rhetoric disregards the extreme difficulties and disorientation slaves endure as they are passed along in the trade's international supply chain. Nazer was shipped over and imprisoned by the Koronky family which prevented her from ever seeking aid from the state or knowing it existed at all. Again, this dispute sheds light on the state's lack of knowledge about the trade at this time and how marginalized people were exploited by the underground economy. Denying victims their rights and protection further disempowers former slaves like Nazer and allows the trade to continue without penalty.

The Home Office's rejection of Nazer's case also illustrates how states that profit from forced labor act in collusion with other nations to keep the market functioning. As noted in Nazer's rejection letter, Britain defended its initial decision by stating: "Whilst slavery may exist in some parts of Sudan, the practice is not condoned by the Sudanese government" (Leigh, "Escaping Slavery"). This claim absolves the African country from being responsible for allowing the slave trade to exist within its borders. However, in actuality, the then ruling Islamic-fundamentalist regime in Khartoum was repeatedly cited for using its militias to kidnap and enslave women and children in South Sudan (Leigh, "Foreign Office"). Nazer herself was a victim of this process: "I and other captured children were taken to Sudanese government army camps" (323). Her appeal continues to question why Britain seeks to protect the political reputation of Sudan rather than victims of its slave trade:

> The British Government accepts that there is slavery in the war zones and that
> sales are sent to North Sudan – yet they are refusing to give me asylum when I

> was captured and kept as a slave in exactly the wat they describe. The British government accepts that Nuba people suffer death and injury because the Sudanese government attacks the Nuba people, yet they propose to return me to the Nuba Mountains. How can I possibly be safe there? (323)

Rather than provide Nazer protection and rights, the state chooses to place her back into the same precarious environment that exploited and abused her as a commodity. Returning to Sudan would ultimately make her vulnerable to the slave trade again and keep her locked in the economy's cycle of abuse. Dangers such as these exist since both states actively participate and benefit from a profitable and powerful economy. By continuing to place former slaves in lethal situations, each nation can reinforce its sovereignty and authority over populations it seeks to eliminate.

Despite her lack of options for protection, Nazer is able to locate a source of agency that helps liberate her from the global slave trade. The publication of *Slave* shared her story with Western audiences that soon rallied support for the author's liberation. Initially, the memoir was published in Germany in 2002 where it was widely-read before it was available in Britain and the United States. *Slave*'s mass appeal in Europe assisted Nazer in acquiring allies that advocated for her asylum. Damien Lewis, a British journalist, is the most prominent of her supporters as he helped to translate, write, and share her story with the West. Various modern slave narratives are co-written with the help of European authors, yet this circumstance questions if peripheral and disempowered voices can truly "speak" without being misrepresented even by well-meaning parties. This situation consequently echoes Gayatri Spivak's exploration of subaltern women and their agency in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In this essay, Spivak criticizes how Western intellectuals such as Michel Foucault and Giles Deleuze have interpreted and spoken for

dispossessed populations. Engaging in this type of representation is problematic as it can

"hide the privileging of the intellectual and of the 'concrete' subject" (Spivak 87). In

regard to *Slave*, Lewis recognizes that his position as "a white English man in his late

thirties" is vastly different than that of "a black Nuba woman in her early twenties (337).

Language is a particular factor that separates the two authors as Lewis could barely speak

Arabic and did not know any words in Nuba. Meanwhile, Nazer only knew basic English

as she was only free for less than a year when the pair began to write. The oral tradition

of the Nuba people was also a concern as Nazer's community did not rely on written texts

to share their stories. Despite these differences, the project was completed by having

Nazer speak to Lewis "slowly in English" and "using an English-Arabic dictionary"

(338) when translation issues arose. The writing process subsequently took on a hybrid

cultural form that relied heavily on oral storytelling but also the English language. In this

way, Nazer's speech was not completely silenced by Western forces and she was able to

her memoir as a vehicle for liberation.

While discrepancies of power are still present in this procedure, the publication of

Slave, and the global attention it brought to Nazer's case, ultimately saved her from

returning to the global slave trade. As noted in the Home Office Minister's final decision

letter

> I have read Ms. Nazer's account of her experiences in Sudan. In the view of the
> widespread publication of her book and the high profile given to her claims both
> in Sudan and elsewhere, I am satisfied that Ms. Nazer would face difficulties
> which would bring her within the scope of the 1951 [refugee] convention were
> she to return to Sudan. For these reasons it has been decided to recognize her as a
> refugee and grant her Indefinite Leave to Remain in the United Kingdom. (331)

The way in which Western allies intervened on Nazer's behalf is certainly problematic as their efforts essentially helped liberate the former slave. However, without the help of Western – and mostly white – allies, Nazer's case could have simply been denied and she would have been returned to Sudan. This is certainly the situation that other escaped slaves face as they file for asylum around the same time as Nazer. In *Slave*, we are told that the author meets a Somalian woman who has also been deprived of protection by the state. This unnamed victim of the slave trade recognizes the differences between her and Nazer's case by recognizing that: "At least you have many people supporting you. Powerful people helping you win your asylum. The media doing stories about you" (327). Similarly, the Koronky's first escaped slave's case was largely ignored by the State until Nazer shed light on this Sudanese woman's predicament. Bringing these cases together uncovers how Nazer's liberation heavily relied on European outcry and assistance that compelled Britain to change its ruling and treatment of stateless women. It is also important to note that the marketability of *Slave* – which later became a Channel Four movie *I Am Slave* in 2010 and a stage production called *Slave* in 2011 – also helped bring attention to Nazer's case.[34] Therefore, even the commodification of a commodification story relied upon Western audience's approval and support. Nevertheless, it was Nazer who escaped captivity and co-wrote a memoir that caught Western readers' attention. *Slave* was indeed co-written with Lewis yet it still is an

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[34] Nazer's story would also be used for the basis for Zadie Smith's 2013 short story, "The Embassy of Cambodia." This narrative also deals with characters from the Global South that are victims of forced labor in London.

important text since it helps to critique the Global North's participation and creation of the modern slave trade. Or, as Kelli Lyon Johnson claims:

> these narratives serve as perhaps the most important tool for fighting slavery in the twenty-first century because of the depth and breadth of information they provide, the turning points they identify, the awareness they raise, the empathy they evoke, and the action they demand. (246)

With regard to Spivak, Nazer's memoir ultimately allows her to "speak" to the post-imperial and neoliberal nations that profit from the exploitation of marginalized women. *Slave* subsequently helps bring attention to the plight of commodified people that would have remained silenced if Nazer had not taken advantage of her available agency.

Death Will Have No Dominion: Sex Slaves, Precarity, and Female Agency in Becoming Abigail

Abani's novella presents how young Abigail is taken from Nigeria to London by her devious uncle, Peter. To gain a better education, Abigail's father forces his daughter to travel to the former metropole. Unfortunately, Peter uses the promise of a better life as a front to easily deliver children into London's sex slave industry. A false passport with fictitious information permits Abigail to enter the city, yet this strategy also makes her body vulnerable to abuse as it enters the shadow economy. While Abani's narrative presents a fictional depiction of the sex slave trade, actual events that occurred in London helped him shape Abigail's story. Around 1996, the author recalls

> The news came on, and there is this Nigerian girl on the television, and her face was just beaten to a pulp, and one eye was closed over… Apparently, what had happened was some Nigerians had brought her over as a domestic, and then I don't know what she did, but they beat her so badly and chained her up in the back yard… Then months later, I was in the South Bank and I was reading a

newspaper, it was a story about a young woman who was A Moroccan immigrant who was being deported, she was about 15, and the judge who sat on her case fell in love with her and it wasn't clear whether they had a sexual relationship, but he was fired and this young woman in a sort of misguided attempt to save him through her understanding of love actually committed suicide… Essentially that's where Abigail came from. (NPR Books)

These two events reveal the hazardous obstacles female migrants face as they attempt to survive in the post-imperial city. While the experiences of this population can range from slavery, trafficking, and voluntary immigration, I want to focus on the women whose bodies are subjugated and commodified by forced labor since few or inadequate resources exist to help these people that are often silenced by their captors or the UK's immigration policies. This is an issue Abani takes up in *Becoming Abigail* as he recognizes that "places of silence are often littered with the bodies of women" (NPR Books). However, like with *Slave*, the question of authorship must be interrogated as Abani speaks for his Nigerian female protagonist. Real-life events did help Abani construct the plot of *Becoming Abigail*, yet some critics could argue that a male author creating this novella further silences marginalized women. Indeed, the issue of authorship must be kept in mind to measure how effective a text is in presenting the trauma experienced by female bodies. Abigail's resilient character however shows us that Abani is not simply creating a victim but a powerful female that finds the will to fight back against her oppressors. Abani's Nigerian nationality and past position as a political prisoner also help him describe the terrors Abigail faces when she is entangled by the political practices of the state. As such, his novella provides an account that uncovers how gendered necropolitics operate in London.

 Becoming Abigail differs in style from Nazer's memoir as it tells the fictional

story of a young Nigerian girl that is trafficked into sexual slavery in London. Unlike Nazer, Abigail faces a different form of slavery that uses her body as a sexual product that is commodified and consumed by British citizens. Abani's novella delves into this matter by recounting portions of the girl's memories throughout the narrative to illustrate how she becomes oppressed by different men that work in the global sex slave trade. Additionally, the novella does not simply stop at describing the process of enslavement but follows the protagonist as she escapes her confinement. Abigail's life after sexual slavery is important since it details how arduous it is for escapees to find proper legal and social care from the state's institutions. As will be discussed later, the girl is assigned to a male social worker that sexually abuses the child and further damages her mental state. Abigail's life after slavery is therefore much different than Nazer who goes on to seek asylum via the legal system. The young girl is placed under the care of the state due to her age which implies that she was not complicit in becoming a prostitute. If Abigail was older, she perhaps would have faced the same legal battle as Nazer did when requesting asylum. Abani's fictional text offers a different story of human trafficking that gives readers another perspective into the horrors of London's shadow economy. While *Becoming Abigail* does not the same factual heft as *Slave*, the novella still reveals how disempowered postcolonial African women are targeted by human traffickers in search of vulnerable bodies.

In 2016, the UK's first independent anti-slavery commissioner, Kevin Hyland, reported that the movement of women and girls from Nigeria to Europe is one of the most consistent in global trafficking. This development is discussed in Abani's text by

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describing how the sex industry connects contemporary Nigeria to London. While Abigail directly reaches the post-imperial city by way of air transport, many Nigerian women are moved around various European cities until they arrive at their final destination in the UK. Hyland notes that more than 90% of these girls and women that are trafficked from Nigeria are from one section of the country: Edo state. This rural area provides the majority of sex slaves to Europe although it is only home to less than 2% of Nigeria's population. Traffickers lure women, girls, and boys from this state by promising economic opportunities that are non-existent in underdeveloped sections of the country. With limited sources for income or advancement, impoverished or uneducated women from Edo are easy targets for recruiters that can usually operate without fear of punishment by local authorities (Hyland).

Abani does not make clear where Abigail is from yet her story uncovers how the female migrant body suffers as it is transported to London. Abigail's mistreatment, however, begins in Nigeria as the protagonist attempts to claim ownership over her identity and body in a patriarchal society. Small instances of abuse occur early on and eventually culminate as she becomes commodified and exposed to death. At the start of her life, Abigail loses possession of her individuality since she looks very similar to her mother who dies during childbirth. Family members treat and speak to Abigail as if she was her mother and not a separate girl with her own life. This treatment begins as Abani's text opens with the mother's funeral where "the sound of women crying" (19) overpowers any other memory Abigail can recall. The death of the mother causes her "to be replaced by another momentarily" (19) which becomes the young protagonist.

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Abigail's likeness to her mother disallows her from forming her own identity as her family continually impose their old memories on the child. Abigail's father is the most prominent character who sees the girl as the embodiment of his deceased wife. In one instance, the father drunkenly stares at his daughter and recognizes that "She looked so much like her mother that when he saw her suddenly, he knew that he wanted her to be Abigail" (22). While some of this emotion comes from his depression, it is later revealed that the father also begins to have a sexual "longing" (22) for his daughter. Incestuous desire troubles Abigail's relationship with her father and the young girl is left without any emotional support from her family.

This mental abuse leads to other instances of cruelty that are enacted by other male characters. At age ten, a 15-year-old cousin "swapped [Abigail's] cherry for a bag of sweets" (30). This initial sexual experience devalues and dehumanizes the young girl's body as her older relative takes advantage of the innocent character. Moreover, this moment of sexual domination introduces Abigail to the abusive behaviors that can exist in a patriarchal society as Edwin warns her "I will kill you if you tell anyone" (30). Another moment of sexual abuse occurs two years later when Abigail is molested by her "cousin" Peter during his wedding.[35] After cornering her in the bathroom, Peter kisses Abigail and "explores" (64) her body before returning to his bride. Abigail initially is unfazed by this mistreatment since "even at a young age she knew what men were like" (64). An early history of sexual and mental abuse distances the protagonist from her body

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[35] Abani's narrator reveals that Peter is not really blood related but merely called cousin or uncle because he is married to Abigail's cousin Mary.

and muddles her understanding of affection. These conditions are exasperated as Abigail is taken away from her home and transformed into a sexual commodity in London.

Abigail's abuse continues during her teenage years as Peter returns to continue dominating her body. By posing as a "successful business man" (64), Peter deceives Abigail's father into thinking he will improve his daughter's life by providing her a higher of level of education. It is later revealed that many other "lucky" (64) children have been given over to Peter for similar reasons. However, these children have met a similar fate as they traveled to Britain and became disposable and exploitable bodies. It is not uncommon for male relatives or acquaintances to be the ones who recruit girls and women into the sex slave trade. As Barberán Reinares notes, "the unequal development between first and third world provides the grounds for a lucrative business where some African men seize the opportunity for profit and act as intermediaries satisfying a demand" (111). Peter's trafficking scheme is therefore a common tactic used by recruiters in Nigeria to deceive vulnerable women into the shadow economy. Abigail's journey into slavery is moved ahead as her father exerts control over his daughter one last time and allows Peter to take her to London. By using a fake passport and forged visa, Abigail is moved across national borders and is stripped of her rights as she enters London. Theses false papers are regularly used by traffickers to get their products into new countries and ultimately turn women into criminals. Using counterfeit documents to enter Britain is a criminal act and slaves sometimes do not reach out to authorities for help since they fear incarceration or deportation. Abigail's age however places her into a different legal situation where she is later seen by the state as a victim

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that should not be imprisoned since she was not complicit in her trafficking. The girl's innocence is evident as she does not realize the forms of abuse she will face in London. Life at Peter and Mary's house is filled with violence against women as Peter attacks both his wife and later Abigail. Gendered violence that occurred in Nigeria therefore follows Abigail to the city. During her first night in London, Abigail wakes to "the sound of derision, for the softness of flesh, of the heart" (87). Mary is being brutally beaten by Peter and Abigail can only wonder why the wife does not fight back. However, she soon learns that confronting Peter's masculinity is a dangerous undertaking. This is a lesson Mary knows well since Peter killed their two-month-old baby "because she wasn't a boy" (94). After beating the young child, Peter turned his aggression onto the mother and threw Mary down the stairs. The subsequent "accidental" (94) death of the daughter ultimately showed Mary that Peter viewed women as inferior and expendable humans.

As an undocumented woman, Abigail is placed in a precarious situation where Peter is able to control and commodify her body. This merciless situation delivers Abigail into the sex slave trade where she becomes a product of pleasure for British men. Without rights or protection from the state, Abigail's body gradually becomes endangered and possessed by citizens for their gratification. Her abuse begins when Peter and another unidentified man attempt to rape her during the night. This measure is intended to breakdown Abigail so she will submit to the sexual demands of Peter's customers. However, Abigail successfully fights off the man who is instructed to "fuck her. Fucker her hard" (90) and dominate the young woman's body. Challenging male authority only enrages Peter and so he begins to dehumanize Abigail by treating her like a "dirty dog"

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(91). She is handcuffed, gagged, and chained to a pole while Peter urinates on her. Here, the body is a site of gendered violence where the male citizen can completely dominate the undocumented female. The level of brutality and dehumanization rises as time goes on and Abigail becomes further disembodied during her abuse.

> Filth. Hunger. And drinking from the plate of rancid water. Bent forward like a dog. Arms begin her back. Kneeling. Into the mud. And the food. Tossed out leftovers. And the cold. And the numbing cold of limbs that was an even deeper cold…Without hands, she bit at the itches from blood vessels dying in the cold… Bending. Rooting. Her shame was complete. (94)

This form of mistreatment is not uncommon as traffickers will use extreme measures to make their slaves submit to their roles as sexual products. Abigail's constant physical suffering and mental mistreatment bring her close to death as Peter repeatedly rapes and beats her in the snowy backyard. While Mary nurses the "girl slowly becoming a dog" (94), she can only stand-by as Abigail endures countless acts of debasement. Agency therefore is something the girl must locate and use through her own means.

Although Abigail resented the many comparisons to her mother, she finds that embracing her likeness gives her a source of power that specifically confronts violence aimed at stateless women. Fifteen days of abuse by Peter brings the girl to embrace her mother's strong nature. Back in Nigeria, the elder Abigail challenged male supremacy when she would

> confront wife beaters and explain to them, quietly and politely, that if they didn't change she would cut off their penises…A woman who was feared by most men for her independent spirit; who at thirty-five became a judge, and set up the first free women's advocacy group. (48)

The mother's identity subsequently inspires Abigail as she chooses to fight back against her oppressor. Rather than allowing the undocumented female body to continue to be a site of violence, Abigail subverts this positioning by harming the male body. One night the girl "invokes the spirit of Abigail" (99) and physically and figuratively emasculates her abuser by biting of his penis. This moment becomes a turning point for the young girl as she escapes from slavery and begins to reclaim her body. By marking and scaring her body, Abigail takes back her physical self by expelling the memories of the "men who had taken her in her short lifetime" (28). This ritual begins as she writes "me" across her breasts with a crayon in order to initiate the "reclamation (29) of her body. Rather than allow men to claim these specific parts, Abigail stresses that she owns them and they help construct her identity. The temporary markings are soon substituted by more permanent cigarette burns that singe small words into her flesh. Along her forearms can be read "Not Abigail. My Abigail. Her Abigail? Ghosts. Death. Me. Me. Me. Not Nobody" (36). The modifications Abigail makes to her body help her reclaim her identity and access a form of agency where she solely has dominion over her physical self.

Despite Abigail's attempts to liberate and repossess her body, the state soon intervenes in her life and she is once again delivered into a dangerous situation. After escaping Peter's home, the protagonist is taken into custody by a government agency that looks after trafficking victims. The character's young age disallows the state from deporting or jailing her since she is not seen as being complicit in her trafficking. However, despite this treatment, the novella makes readers question if state-sponsored organizations are a safer place for trafficked girls. Derek, who is married and a much

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older, is assigned to take care of Abigail after her escape. While many of his colleagues suggest that the girl receives "psychiatric treatment in a confined facility" (112), Derek ignores this advice and Abigail's traumatic past and chooses to treat the girl in his home. The state's absence in this decision suggests how it can sometimes not adequately take care of women that have escaped slavery. As noted previously, the UK's modern legislation for trafficking victims does not always offer the proper psychological care to escaped slaves. Keeping track of these women's mental states is therefore an issue that complicates how Abigail's body is treated by an employee of the system. Correspondingly, this situation allows the British social worker to engage in a problematic relationship with an underage girl that has recently experienced the horrors or rape, torture, and violence. [36] Derek begins making advances towards Abigail as the two spend time together in London. Kissing his patient gradually progresses into a full sexual relationship. Derek subsequently not only commits adultery but he also has sex with a minor since Abigail is only fourteen. The social worker's decision to initiate and participate in these actions signals his lack of professionalism and concern for the young girl. Unfortunately, Abigail's mistreatment continues as she is passed from one abuser to another even after her initial escape. Such a sequence of events if not seen in *Slave* as Nazer is given a different set of options by the state after she flees her captor. Abigail's

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[36] Scholars have previously analyzed this moment in Abani's text and have had differing opinions about Derek and Abigail's relationship. In *Cargo Culture: Literature in an Age of Mass Displacement*, Ashley Dawson claims that Abigail's intimate sexual moments with Derek demonstrate how she is able to reach "selfhood." Contrastingly, Laura Barberan Reinares argues in *Postcolonial Sex Trafficking* that Derek's pursuit of the young girl is pedophilic and abusive.

mental condition therefore continues to decline throughout her time with Derek. The narrative describes that during her intimate moments with the social worker, "Abigail was giving. For the first time, she wasn't taken… Abigail, this Abigail, only this Abigail, always this Abigail felt herself becoming, even in this moment of taking" (54). However, a girl who has suffered a lifetime of sexual abuse may not fully recognize when she is being exploited by an older man. Derek's position as a state employee may also add to the confusion as Abigail has been instructed that this person is supposedly trained to handle previously enslaved girls. The problematic relationship between Abigail and Derek therefore reveals how a victim of the shadow economy can continue to be manipulated even after liberation.

While mostly absent during Abigail's mistreatment, the state intercedes only when Derek is arrested for his illicit sexual activities. The social worker's wife discovers the couple engaging in sex one night and has her husband detained by the authorities. The state never investigates how Abigail is treated after her escape until this moment. In an effort to protects its legitimacy, the state jails Derek yet does not conduct further investigations into the anti-trafficking agency's operations. Such a practice places future victims of the slave trade into a dangerous position as they too could end up like Abigail even after liberation. Derek's incarceration ends the relationship however Abigail is detrimentally affected by the court's decision as her supposed love becomes denied. Although the girl tells the court that it was "her choice" (119) to have sex with her caretaker, the age difference and Abigail's questionable mental condition ultimately condemn Derek. The details of the protagonist's life after the trial are a bit obscure yet

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the novella's final scenes depict her living somewhere along the Thames River. Without the proper aid or protection from the state, she returns to sex work and her body is once again part of the shadow economy. This predicament exposes how inadequate the state's support is for trafficking victims, and how many of these women are pushed back into criminal acts that will further deny them any help. Specifically, granting citizenship to escaped slaves could help alleviate the cycle of abuse that exists due to poor support systems. This measure however is not readily available as women from postcolonial and third-world countries are seen as unwelcome bodies by the state. Preventing the entrance of these individuals into the body politic is therefore an important task for dominant nations that want to continue regulating their cultural identity and economic structure. Without a path to citizenship, much of Abigail's final days are spent thinking about how different forces have taken control over her body. The various men who sexually abused her are certainly at fault for her current situation, yet the state also has a major role in the protagonist's demise. Denying Abigail citizenship or asylum status further damages her mental condition as she continues to be treated as a non-person even after she escapes two abusers. Therefore, as a stateless female body, Abigail can only rely upon herself to find liberation from the political and sexual oppression that she has been placed in by larger economic forces.

Rather than continue to be commodified and exploited, Abani's protagonist employs a subversive strategy to deny the state any further control over her body. Abigail's rebellion against necropolitical measures is evident as she burns "DSHND" or "Death shall have no dominion" (42) on her body before she jumps into the Thames.

Through suicide, Abigail claims complete possession of her life by determining how and when it will end. Such an act connects back to Mbembe's claim that "death and freedom are irrecoverably interwoven" (38) and thus suicide is form of agency that can release a body from bondage. Mbembe, via Paul Gilroy, notes that this same strategy was used by runaway slaves in America when they were captured by slave catchers. Individual or mass suicide empowered these slaves as they were able to determine the time and manner of their death (Gilroy, *Black Atlantic* 63). Likewise, Abigail's final decision to take her life places her in the similar "space where freedom and negotiation operate" (Mbembe 38) outside of the state's sovereignty.

These perceptions on suicide, agency, and marginalized women return us to Spivak's investigation of the subaltern. Previously in this chapter, I referenced the critic's seminal work to discuss how Western intellectuals or institutions silence the voices of marginalized women from the Global South. Speech is evidently the central focus of this exploration, yet Spivak also draws upon other forms of bodily "communication" to investigate the subaltern's attempts at agency. Specifically, the Hindu ritual of *sati* or widow suicide is examined by Spivak to discuss how British colonizers muted the symbolic death of Indian women in the 19th century. Self-immolation was a sacred practice that occurred when a widow would set herself alight on her dead husband's funeral pyre. However, the occupying-British saw this custom as a "barbaric" and soon outlawed the practice. Spivak argues that this injunction on Hindu culture and women' agency is ultimately the West reasserting its dominance or "white men saving brown women from brown men" (*Can the Subaltern* 93). Therefore, widows in India were both

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oppressed by forms of Hindu and British patriarchy that restrained women's control over their bodies and lives. This dual form of oppression ultimately disallowed subaltern women from "speaking" as the act of suicide was both governed and motivated by male perspectives on the female body. While Spivak uses this example to show how marginalized women are denied agency even in suicide, she changes her position on this practice later in "Terror: A Speech after 9-11."

> Suicidal resistance is a message inscribed in the body when no other means will get through. It is both execution and mourning, for both self and other, where you die with me for the same cause, no matter which side you are on, with the implication that there is no dishonor in such shared death. (96)

This shift in thinking brings us back to Abigail's liberating death at the end of Abani's text. Although the state denies the female protagonist her humanity and rights, the act of suicide disallows Britain from keeping Abigail in the shadow economy. The girl's death does not signal her inability to "speak" as Spivak's discussion of *sati* would have us understand. Rather, Abigail's final act is an empowering moment where the female body displays its ultimate control over its physical existence. The lack of options available to Abani's protagonist consequently push her to locate an alternative subversive strategy in the spaces of the periphery.

Brexit and the Refugee Crisis

Nazer and Abani's works confront the economic and necropolitical imbalances between postcolonial Africa and post-imperial Britain. As stateless women in London, Nazer and Abigail face similar forms of abuse from a state that exploits these commodified bodies and later denies them rights or proper protection. Nazer and Abigail

however engage in behaviors that challenge how necropolitical and capitalist forces attempt to destroy marginalized people. By locating strategies both in and outside of the margins, each former slave removes herself from the international supply chain. *Slave* and *Becoming Abigail* provide evidence of how stateless people or victims of the modern slave trade can resist or trouble the legal and economic forces that deny them their rights or freedom. While these ideas function in the two narratives, the human trafficking issue in Britain is set to become far more complicated because of the Brexit fallout. As Tom Batchelor reports, the recent Brexit decision threatens to eliminate "twenty years of work with European partners in tackling the trade" ("Road"). The European Union shares trafficking data, sixty-five pieces of legislation, and funding with its members yet Britain's departure from the collective could eliminate these resources and make it much harder to prosecute slaveholders or prevent the slave trade (Batchelor, "Road"). By separating themselves from Europe, Britain can eliminate crucial inner-state policing programs that help prevent trafficking and rescue victims. This situation only adds to Britain's substandard anti-trafficking legislation and programs that have failed to reduce the number of slaves in the nation despite Prime Minister Theresa May's pledge to fight against "the greatest human rights issue of our time" with 33 million pounds of funding (Bulman, "Inexcusable"). However, better communication between the government, anti-trafficking agencies, and local authorities could help prevent the mistreatment that Abigail and Nazer faced during their time in the human slave trade.

Chapter Four

Terror, Oil and Environmental Justice in Helon Habila's in *Oil on Water* and Christie Watson's *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away*

In early June 2017, a militant group called the New Delta Avengers (NDA) vowed to "resurrect the spirit of insurgency" to pressure the Nigerian government and foreign oil companies to share their profits with local villagers (Gaffey). While Nigeria has become Africa's second-largest economy due to its abundant oil, the 2016 United Nations' Human Development Report found that 50.9 % of citizens continue to live in multidimensional poverty (United Nations). Underprivileged Nigerians face short life expectancy, low standards of living, and limited access to education as they are barred from benefiting from their country's natural resource. Militant factions like the NDA consequently use fierce actions against the state and Western petroleum companies to regain control of their lands and equity to petrodollars. Accordingly, the group's inaugural message to the government reflected their reliance on violence: "We are going to do this through bloody attacks and destruction of oil assets in the creeks and upland areas so as to disrupt and eventually cripple oil prospecting and production operations in the state" (Owolabi). In 2016, rebels attacked oil pipelines and refining facilities to slow production and gain influence in the area. The militants' actions proved to be successful as the global supply in oil plummeted and local politicians agreed to negotiate with the fighters. Along with confronting their corrupt government, insurgents like the NDA challenge the economic and political power of Western companies such as Royal Dutch Shell (RDS). This British company has been extracting oil from the Delta as far back as

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the colonial 1950s and continues to coerce local politicians and police. Due to its influence over the government, RDS freely operates in the wetlands without concern for the environment or the health of villagers. Sections of the Delta have become toxic and others are increasingly unstable as foreign companies enlist private armies to overtake oil deposits. The despoiling of Nigeria's coastal area overwhelmingly benefits the West who sell, purchase, and use petroleum. Locals rarely see any economic return as they are forced out of their homes due to violence or pollution. The residents and natural resources of the Delta are consequently experiencing a form of neocolonialism that sustains past and unequal economic relationships between Britain and Nigeria. European petroleum companies assume the role of master by continuing to extract oil from the Niger Delta and controlling the nation's operations.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri contend that globalization has dissolved national sovereignty and given way to a modern form of imperialism called "Empire" where multi-national corporations use global capitalism to oppress populations and control assets (31).[37] Correspondingly, Britain's Royal Dutch Shell continues to dominate sections of postcolonial Nigeria by regulating its government, citizens, and oil deposits. Academic discussions about Empire and corporations have become common in the postcolonial field; however, these conversations have ignored how violence is imposed upon the environment of postcolonial nations to sustain global economies. In a time when

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[37] Hardt and Negri identify the contemporary, global colonial project as "Empire." Therefore, throughout this chapter, I will use Empire when referencing modern colonization via state-backed corporations. Historical European colonial projects will be titled as empires.

climate change and resource scarcity overwhelmingly affect marginal groups, writers and scholars need to identify how ecological destruction helps suppress and ultimately terminate disempowered populations.

Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* (2010) and Christie Watson's *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away* (2011) help resolve these gaps in scholarship by revealing how British companies and Nigerian elites work together to destabilize and possess the Niger Delta's petroleum through hostile tactics. Despite being from the two opposing nations in this oil war, both novelists critique how states, multi-national corporations, and militants employ violence to control Nigeria's swamplands. Each text focuses on how militant groups use terrorism – particularly kidnapping – to liberate their lands from British petroleum companies that cause environmental destruction in the region. While terrorism is commonly used to describe brutal actions against a state, Habila and Watson also problematize the dominant use of this term by exposing how the Nigerian government and British petroleum companies use violence to acquire a valuable natural resource. This analysis investigates depictions of state violence, arguing that these moments exemplify how government-backed "terrorism" not only coerces marginal communities for economic profit, but also harms the local non-human populations. Insurgents use of kidnapping to gain environmental justice and interrupt global capitalism is also questioned here to re-frame discussions of postcolonial agency outside of the anthropocentric realm. Postcolonial scholars have touted the emancipatory power of terrorism, yet the extent to which kidnapping affects the globalized oil economy has yet to be breached. As such, Habila and Watson's work is analyzed to probe the efficacy of kidnapping while simultaneously

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considering how these texts are making critical interventions in the oil crisis through their narratives.

The Emerging Intersection of Postcolonial Ecocriticism

The recent pairing of ecocriticism and postcolonial theory illuminates how the environment and its inhabitants are affected by colonization. Reviewing the history of this intersection reveals how Western thought about empire and humanity's impact on the environment has changed by including marginal communities' narratives, views, and political movements in these two larger discourses. As such, Habila and Watson's novels help integrate the voices of dispossessed Nigerians into the ongoing development of postcolonial ecocritical thought. Habila's native perspective and Watson's time in Nigeria enable both authors to illustrate how contemporary economic colonization is affecting the Niger Delta ecosystem.[38] As will be explained shortly, the ongoing discussions in this field are generally interested in how foreign agents continue to oppress the people and natural resources of developing areas. What is missing, however, from this dialogue is how postcolonial states are now banding with multi-national corporations to continue the subjection of peripheral communities. Specifically, this chapter considers how state terrorism functions in the Niger Delta and affects both human and non-human populations in unique and discounted ways. This departure from the dominant

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[38] I recognize that Watson's nationality and racial identity are points of criticism for an author that "speaks" for black Nigerians. However, as noted previously, I see her work as an example of how a contemporary British author can comment on how her country is partly responsible for the destabilization occurring in postcolonial Nigeria.

conversations about postcolonial environments challenges scholars to consider how violence is defined and deployed within contemporary resource wars.

In the 1990s, Western academics promoted ecocritical readings of literature by examining American authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Edward Abbey (Nixon, "Slow Violence"). Focusing on this canonical group ignored how marginal and international populations were also connected to the natural world and seeking environmental justice. More recently, postcolonial scholars have corrected this issue by studying the ecological domination of non-European populations. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin posit that this undertaking is vital as:

> Postcolonial studies has come to understand environmental issues not only as central to the projects of European conquest and global domination, but also as inherent in the ideologies of imperialism and racism on which those projects historically – persistently – depend. Not only were other people often regarded as part of nature – and thus treated instrumentally as animals – but they were forced or co-opted over time into western views of the environment, thereby rendering cultural and environmental restitution difficult if not impossible to achieve. (6)

In addition to identifying how colonization affected foreign environments, the sub-field of postcolonial ecocriticism also searches for ways in which formerly oppressed groups seek environmental justice from the commodification and misuse of their natural resources. European empires' authority over foreign environments allowed colonizers to determine how nature would be commodified or used. Particularly, these decisions were driven by materialist views that were interested in making profits from the assets of occupied land. This destructive process continues to exist through Empire's guise of "development," or what Huggan and Tiffin identify as "a vast technocratic apparatus designed primarily to serve the economic and political interests of the West" (27). In

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relation to postcolonial Nigeria, British companies seek to build infrastructure such as highways, refining stations, and power plants that are needed to ease oil and mineral extraction. Britain retains its position as a world power through this operation and Nigeria – like other economically exploited former colonies – continues to founder in a global capitalist system.

The economic exploitation of postcolonial environments not only fuels disparity in Africa, but it also limits the lives of people, animals, and habitats due to ecological devastation. To maximize profits foreign companies and governments disregard the safety of native human and non-human populations while extracting resources. Environmental catastrophes are caused by this practice, and local ecosystems suffer long-lasting consequences. Rob Nixon identifies this form of mistreatment as "slow violence" or "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all (*Environmentalism* 2). In areas like the Niger Delta that are devastated by the production of oil, toxic spills, gas burning, and the leveling of habitats are just some actions that result in suffering and death. However, as Nixon argues, "if the neoliberal era has intensified assaults on resources, it has also intensified resistance, whether through isolated site-specific struggles or through activism that has reached across national boundaries" (4). This observation is a crucial point when considering the power dynamics between postcolonial Nigerians, their state, and British companies. Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier contend that the "environmentalism of the poor" (12) challenges the money, weapons, political clout, and infrastructure of both

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military and corporate organizations.[39] In this sense, the operations of these entities are undermined by the subversive actions of threatened communities. Militants in the Niger Delta use different terrorist activities to challenge British companies and Nigerian elites for possession of wetlands. As mentioned earlier, the ethics and efficacy of these strategies need to be interrogated to identify what extent postcolonial agency is gaining environmental justice. The rebellious acts of insurgents are often labeled as "terrorism" by the Nigerian state and its economic partners. While such classification is problematic, so too is how scholars overlook the use of state terrorism in relation to environmental struggles. The following section subsequently uses *Oil on Water* and *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away* to illustrate how the Nigerian government uses violence to not only suppress the environmentalism of the poor, but also to dominate the non-human inhabitants of the Delta through terrorism.

Rethinking Terrorism in an Environmental Context: State-backed Violence in the Niger Delta

"Terrorism" is a contested term specifically when dominant powers like governments or corporations attempt to define it and apply the label to a "hostile" parties' actions. Militants in Habila and Watson's novels are continually referred to as terrorists by state agents, media pundits, and British petroleum employees. These dominant

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[39] The Global North's environmentalism is driven more for the sake of protecting nature for leisure activities or transforming Western consumer habits. See Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier's *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South* for more information on these differences.

assemblages never consider poor Nigerians to be freedom fighters or protectors of their environment. However, depictions of state-backed violence in these two texts indicate that the Nigerian governments is also capable of enacting terrorism upon its own citizens. *Oil on Water* and *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away* subsequently act as counter-narratives as they dispel the popular notion that only rebels or peripheral groups are destabilizing the Niger Delta.

Jeffrey A. Sluka observes that academia has ignored the ways in which contemporary nations use violence against their people for political means (1). This gap in scholarship is even more alarming when considering that "the major form of terrorism in the world today is that practiced by states and their agents and allies" (Sluka 1). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, I use Richard Jackson's more expansive description of the terrorism as he argues that the act: "is violence or its threat intended as a symbolically communicative act in which direct victims of the action are instrumentalized as a means to creating a psychological effect of intimidation and fear in a target audience for a political objective" (8). Habila and Watson's novels show how the Nigerian government's aggressive maneuvers in the Delta fall under this definition as they attack militants and civilians to gain control of oil deposits. However, non-human victims must also be included in discussions of state terrorism as these populations share interdependent relationships with humans. Recognizing this connection is vital in order to understand how the Nigerian government's violent tactics create widespread and long-lasting environmental issues that destroy entire ecosystems.

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Although they have yet to receive extensive academic analysis, contemporary authors have been rapidly producing novels that highlight the environmental and political issues occurring in the Delta.[40]. Like Shell, the ABZ Oil Company in *Oil on Water* and the Western Oil Company in *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away* enlist the state to help overtake rural wetlands from villagers and gain access to petroleum deposits. Habila's novel depicts the journey of Rufus, a journalist that travels far into the Niger Delta to find a British woman that has been kidnapped by a militant group. In *Oil on Water*, the abduction of Isabel Floode occurs as a response to the environmental devastation created by the ABZ Oil Company. Floode's husband James is a petroleum engineer for the corporation and is targeted by insurgents since he is a valuable asset to the industry. Rufus gradually learns about the militants' operations as he travels deeper into the tributaries in search of the Professor - the leader of the self-professed freedom fighters. By visiting different Delta villages, Rufus sees how the state and British company have used violent tactics to overtake land from local communities and harm the wetlands.

While local leaders attempt to resist the exploitation of their ancestral lands, the ABZ Oil Company uses the Nigerian army to frighten villagers into submission. Rufus' encounter with Chief Ibiram reveals that before the arrival of British petroleum employees the locals "lacked for nothing, fishing, and hunting and farming" (42). The community was unified and lived in a sustainable fashion with their surrounding

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[40] Contemporary texts by Nigerian authors that cover the oil crisis in the Delta are: Ibiwari Ikiriko's *Oily Tears of the Delta* (1999), J.P. Clark's *All for Oil* (2000), Nnimmo Bassey's *We Thought It Was Oil but It Was Blood* (2002), Kaine Agary's, *Yellow-Yellow* (2006), Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* (2006), Binebai's *Drums of the Delta* (2010), and Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* (2011).

environment. However, representatives from ABZ gradually invaded the area and began

to coax the locals by offering electricity, roads, modern appliances, and college education

for the youth. To add to the mounting pressure in the village, company representatives

brought in "important politicians from Port Harcourt" (42) to begin intimidating

community leaders. Petroleum workers soon begin to patrol the nearby waters to

antagonize citizens into physical confrontations. A small skirmish between the two sides

eventually allowed the government to arrest the chief on false charges of "supporting

militants and plotting against the federal government" (44). The illegal imprisonment of

the leader gradually turned into a ransoming as the state refused to release or feed the

chief until he sold his people's land.

Accordingly, Okechukwu Ibeanu recognizes that the practice of "harassment of

community leaders through surveillance, arrests, detention and execution" (11) is one of

the state's major forms of terrorism in the Delta. A similar fate befell the Ogoni organizer

Ken Saro-Wiwa in the 1990s as his crusade against Royal Dutch Shell led to the activist's

death. The state arrested the native leader on fabricated charges and subsequently hanged

the protestor to prevent any further dissension.[41] Chief Ibiram, like Saro-Wiwa, is

murdered while in custody and his body is returned to the village as a demonstration of

the government's absolute force. This scene in Habila's work draws attention to "unseen"

murders conducted by the state. Such crimes are regularly ignored or not reported by

Western or local media as witnesses are often silenced or threatened by authorities.

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[41] Despite the international outcry over Wiwa's death, Britain continued to export
industrial products to the Nigerian dictatorship. In fact, Britain was the largest seller of
these items in 1995 (Rowell et al. 11).

Accordingly, after Chief Ibiram's death, ABZ invades the village along "with a whole army, waving guns and looking like they meant business" (44). The fearful Deltans abandon their lands to avoid extermination by the military. Habila thus depicts how the state's imposition of terror suppresses its citizens to secure natural resources for the British corporation. The hostile takeover of village supplants the native population, and the process of oil extraction guarantees that the former inhabitants will not be able to return to their homes. Such a scenario is common in the Delta as Rufus visits various communities that "looked as if a deadly epidemic had swept through it" (8). The soil in these towns is marked by pollutants as well as the "grass growing by the water was suffocated by a film of oil" (10). The contaminated conditions of the wetlands are widespread and keep native people from returning as farming and safe habitation are no longer possible. Beyond the air and soil, the local water is also contaminated as the nearby river ecosystems contain "no birds or fish or other water creatures" (11). Without the animals of the wetlands, economic opportunities have been eliminated as the people once relied upon the tributaries for their daily sustenance and commerce.

Habila's depiction of ecological destruction emphasizes how terrorism that targets humans can eventually spread suffering to non-human inhabitants. As such, the state and ABZ's initial acts of violence do not end with the displacement of local populations. The toxicity that overtakes the wetlands creates various health concerns that the state and British workers refuse to mediate. As noted in a later exchange between Rufus and a village doctor, the aftermath of shoddy oil drilling causes lethal consequences in the exploited villages:

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> And then a year later, when the livestock began to die and the plants began to wither on their stalks, I took samples of the drinking water and in my lab I measured it was rising steadily. In one year it had grown to almost twice the safe level. Of course, the people didn't listen…When I confronted the oil workers, they offered me money and a job. (153)

The death of the cattle and crops in the area illustrates how the wetlands remain in danger even after the oil deposits have been depleted. Yet, what is more concerning from a postcolonial standpoint is that ABZ– and later the state – distance themselves from the violence they have imposed on the Delta. The doctor adds that he sends his findings to local authorities, NGOs, and academic journals, yet still the state does nothing to protect its citizens or environment. Without government intervention or foreign aid, the local physician sees the "whole village disappear" (153).

Nigeria's inaction is in reality an extension of state terrorism, as the government refuses to protect its citizens from the environmental hazards created by a foreign corporate entity. Deltans succumb to various cancers, birth defects, and other maladies as the government and ABZ refuse to clean up the toxic destruction their drilling operations have left behind. Laura Westra posits that the boundaries of state terrorism "should include not only the environmental harms generated by overconsumption but the specific burden of disease imposed by mining and other extractive industries… and many others at specific Third World locations" (104). Indeed, the aftermath of oil production needs to be included in discussions of state violence. However, this dialogue needs to move beyond the anthropocentric and consider how non-human animals, plants, and biomes also suffer as a result of ecological devastation. Habila's novel assists in augmenting how "terrorism" is defined and deployed by organizations outside of the stereotypical

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extremist category. This work is vital as media coverage both in the Nigeria and abroad often fails to critique how the brutal actions of the state or its disregard for the safety of marginal communities.

British author Christie Watson's novel *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away* echoes many of Habila's concerns about the often-ignored state terror imposed upon the Delta. In her text, a young girl named Blessing moves from Lagos to a remote village in the wetlands called Warri. Most of the natives live in impoverished and polluted surroundings while British employees of the Western Oil Company live in a luxurious guarded compound. The stark contrast between these living conditions creates tension in Warri as both communities continually battle over the land and oil profits that are taken from the area. To secure their hold over the wetlands, the British petroleum company enlists the state's "Kill and Go Army" to protect its employees and infrastructure from militants and incensed villagers. The private soldiers use lethal tactics to suppress local resistance and ensure the government's economic policies in the Delta are maintained.

During her time in Warri, Blessing is continually cautioned by the locals to stay away from the tributaries as the state's private army guards these sections for the Western Oil Company. Gunfire and explosions are constantly heard in her small town and the Kill and Go's casualties are often villagers. In fact, Watson's narrative frequently mentions how a firefight or bombing can be heard in the distance as locals go about their lives. The entire community is constantly in a state of anxiety as they fear the deadly wrath of the paramilitary. It is not until Blessing meets Boneboy, an adopted child, that she realizes how indiscriminate the private army's murderous activities are. As her grandmother

recalls: "Boneboy had parents and a village way into the creeks. But the mobile police, the Kill and Go police, came for them. They had reports of some boys there, some no-good boys, but it was not true. The police came and killed the whole village. Boneboy's parents are dead (63). Like the arrest of Chief Ibiram in *Oil on Water*, the Kill and Go police use false charges to attack villagers living in resource-rich areas. The execution of Boneboy's community also goes without punishment as the government supports the combatants' lethal activities. Like Habila, Watson provides stories about Deltans in order to reveal how disempowered citizens are frequently the victims of the state's terrorist operations. Identifying how the Nigerian state uses mercenaries broadens the public's awareness of the covert forces that ensure the government's authority.

Extra-judicial killings help eliminate local opposition while also instilling fear within the marginal communities of the Delta. Sluka identifies groups like the Kill and Go police as "death squads" and contends that "despite being sanctioned by key sectors of the government apparatus, they are distinct enough from the official chain of command for governments to maintain a "plausible denial" of involvement with them (5). Therefore, the state can claim innocence in regards to the death or harassment of its citizens. While armed groups are loosely connected to the government, their operations are financed and driven by the global consumer demand for oil. British corporations in turn profit from the extermination or displacement of poor Nigerians as petroleum reserves become added to their holdings. Ironically, Augustine Ikelegbe reveals that "the incentives the multinational corporations provide motivate the security forces to harass and intimidate community members and to apply excessive force" (181). Companies like

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Western Oil use profits from resource extraction to employ Nigerians to attack their own countrymen and women.

The government's treatment of its citizens is vastly different when considering how it accommodates and guards the lives of British petroleum workers. Blessing notes that while the Warri people are in a constant state of fear of their government, the Western Oil employees are protected by the nation's forces. Every day sirens blare across the village as the Britons "get taken to work in armored vans with police escorts" (59). The foreigners' lives are subsequently valued more by the state as they maintain the production of oil. Although the employees' compound is in Warri, the Britons live in a space free of the pollutants and poverty the locals constantly deal with every day. The profits from oil extraction allow Western Oil and the state to "create a completely different world" (79) in the compound that is complete with swimming pools and a golf course. Ironically, these amenities are used for pleasure by the British workers while Nigerians outside the guarded walls cannot access clean water, land, or air. Warri chiefs are cognizant of this enduring ecological problem as they note that the environment "Gives us respiratory diseases, cancers, make our women suffer miscarriage after miscarriage, and make our children deformed!" (188). By exposing how foreigners live differently than Deltans, Watson's novel critiques how privileged Britons disregard the well-being of Nigerians and their environment. This form of commentary is significant as Watson condemns her own countrymen for being complicit in the subjection of postcolonial people.

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Nigerian elites partner with the Western Oil company to protect their mutual financial interests with acts of terrorism. While Watson reveals that the government's forces attack villagers, she also emphasizes that the British company permits the murder of poor Deltans. The profits from oil production allow Western Oil to control the Nigerian government and pay for the removal of native people. Through this method, the foreign company establishes a neocolonial system whereby Britons continue to control the economy and environment of Nigeria. Local Warri leaders denounce their state's lack of freedom: "The politicians are controlled by the oil companies! This war would not be happening if the oil companies did not pay for the military regime. The oil companies pay direct to the Kill and Go police and the army. They do not even hide it. The blood is on their hands" (186). The atrocities occurring in Delta are both enabled by the Nigerian government and its foreign corporate partner as they share the profits of oil extraction. Certainly, the unwarranted killing of civilians connects to the list of state terrorist activities that befall the poor in the Delta. The extent of deaths in the wetlands however prompts one of the leaders to ultimately denounce the states actions as "genocide" (187).

By targeting the people and environment of the Delta, the state and its corporate ally use similar terrorist practices to oppress the citizens and control oil deposits. Habila and Watson show how the work of Empire is fueled by economic benefit and maintained by the elimination of native lives and ecosystems. Military forces and private soldiers exercise the state's authority over its citizens to quell any resistance to oil extraction and environmental destruction. The extent to which the government uses violence to continue the despoilment of the Delta illustrates how attacks on the poor and their land are

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commonplace. In Ken Saro Wiwa's prison diaries, Sophia Akhuemokhan argues that the activist's writings reveal "trauma as it functions in the new Africa – not as an accident of fate but as a major component of the machinery of terrorism. This machine is manned solely by government agents" (48). The carnage experienced by Habila and Watson's characters corroborate and extend this notion as the contemporary inhabitants of the wetlands – both human and non-human – endure the same mistreatment by the state as their ancestors.

Considering Terror for Environmental Liberation and Economic Autonomy

Despite the fear and violence that is inflicted upon disempowered Deltans, militants appropriate the use of terror to oust their foreign occupiers and undermine the lethal operations of its government. The liberation struggle in the wetlands draws from past anti-colonial movements across the world. In 1961, Frantz Fanon advocated for the use of force to overthrow European empires as "colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence" (*Wretched of the Earth* 61). Fanon does not state what hostile practices will oust the colonizer; however, he does contend that violence will undermine the master's dominance. Nigeria's dispossessed are using hostile tactics for their struggle – like other anti-colonial groups – yet these actions are not to be conflated with contemporary religious extremist terrorism that is often spotlighted by the media and globally denounced. Sovereignty rights over land and

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resources are key and distinct factors that identify the work of Deltan agents as unique within the spectrum of terrorist activities.

It is important to note that Fanon and other postcolonial scholars do not simply espouse terrorism and ignore other available possibilities for liberation. Rather, as Gayatri Spivak asserts, Fanon only advocates for extreme hostility because "there is no other response possible to an absolute absence of response and an absolute exercise of legitimized violence from the colonizers" (*Concerning Violence*). To combat state violence and economic colonization, rebels have been utilizing eco-terrorist strategies like oil bunkering, pipeline explosions, and infrastructure vandalism to halt the despoilment of their lands. [42] [43] Cajetan N. Iheka however denounces these practices as the destruction of oil infrastructure simply adds more damage to Nigeria's environment (426 – 427). Militant groups are now switching to kidnapping Britons to gain influence on an international level. When these foreigner workers and their families are captured by militants, both the state and British companies are affected. Scholars like Dianna M. Concannon has defined and characterized kidnapping in different ways to fit various scenarios.[44] Yet, since Deltan militants focus on the emancipation of the wetlands and its

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[42] Oil bunkering is the process of stealing oil directly from pipelines and later selling it.

[43] Eco-terrorism focuses its attacks on the infrastructure or buildings that are used to commodify and destroy the natural world. For example, dams, power plants, logging equipment, etc.

[44] Concannon's larger categorizations of the kidnapping are domestic kidnapping (intrafamily), political kidnapping, predatory kidnapping of an adult or minor, profit kidnapping, revenge kidnapping, and staged kidnapping (used to cover up another crime) (4).

resources, kidnapping in this context is unique to its location, ransom target, and political goal. Habila and Watson's texts illustrate this distinct practice as a way of exposing how environmental justice is being achieved in the wetlands.

Oil on Water features the abduction of a British petroleum engineer's wife Isabel Floode. The ransoming of this foreigner is led by a local rebel leader called the Professor who, as a former employee of the British corporation, "grew disgusted with environmental abuse and he became a militant to fight for change" (156). The Professor consequently targets the Floode family as they are extremely prized by ABZ as the husband is a chief engineer. Like the petroleum workers in Watson's novel, the British family is also protected from the harmful pollution and violence created by oil extraction. The Britons' home is "hidden behind a tall, barbed-wire-topped wall" guarded by "two gates and half a dozen security men talking to each other on radios" (100). The manner in which the Floodes live subsequently shows how they are uniquely treated due to their nationality and importance to ABZ. As such, when Rufus is instructed to find Isabel in the Delta, her husband's guard demands "that nothing must happen to her" specifically because she is "a British citizen" (35). Habila indicates that this kind of preferential treatment leads people like the Floodes to lack sympathy for the Deltan villagers. Accordingly, James Floode is only focused on the monetary benefits that can be made in Nigeria and ignores how the oil industry is destabilizing a postcolonial nation. He remarks to Rufus that "You people could easily be the Japan of Africa, the USA of Africa, but the corruption is incredible" (103). Rather than acknowledging that his

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country and company are complicit in creating a culture of corruption and violence, Floode looks down upon Deltans for not capitalizing on their nation's resource.

The emphasis on nationality in these scenes demonstrates how being tied to the West and its economies affords an individual a certain worth. Unlike the Floodes, the natives in the Delta are not integral parts of the global oil supply chain and, therefore, they are insignificant to Western citizens and companies. The ongoing environmental crisis in Nigeria's wetlands and the international community's lack of response corroborates this notion. Oil spills such as the BP catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico are addressed by Western agencies, yet these same countries and companies ignore the ongoing despoilment of the Delta. However, beyond this unequal evaluation of human life, Habila's text demonstrates that by terrorizing Western citizens the global oil economy can be interrupted. Oriola posits that militants target Americans and Britons as these populations are symbolic and empowered people in a globalized world. As such:

> Insurgents are consciously engaged in performative hailing of the international community. American and British hostages are particularly prized trophies theatrically displayed in the creeks for the world's view. The premium places on oil workers from the US and the UK coincides not only with their citizenship of most of the oil workers but also the relationship to the Nigerian state with these powers and their relative strength in the comity of nation-states. (Oriola 42)

Ransoming UK or US citizens assists militants in drawing attention to their cause as they trouble the political and economic stability of the West. Through this practice, violence and destruction is shifted away from the Delta and is instead delivered to Britain – and to some extent, the rest of the West.

Rebels in Watson's novel also capitalize on the value of Britons to gain leverage in their fight for environmental justice. The Sibeye Boys, in particular, are a band of

young men from Warri who sabotage the Western Oil Company's operations in the surrounding area. Ezekiel, Blessing's older brother, is attracted to the power that the gang is able to attain through their use of terrorism. The young man is especially fascinated with the militants' version of environmental justice, treating "the oil workers [as] *white gold*" in retaliation for the British taking Nigeria's "*black gold*" (304; author's emphasis). By seizing the human commodities of the oil company, the rebels appropriate the violent operations of Western Oil and transfer power and profit back to the village. Ezekiel's loyalty to the Sibeye Boys is challenged as his mother becomes engaged to a British employee of the Western Oil Company named Dan. While such a move could be auspicious for Ezekiel and Blessing, the boy detests Dan since his work has caused many Nigerians to suffer. Ezekiel accuses the British worker of being complicit in his family's oppression: "You people come here…and take our women…and our money. And our jobs… You pay people to kill us, and you rape our land, then our women!" (270). Dan's involvement in the environmental devastation of the Delta drives Ezekiel to help orchestrate the employee's abduction during his mother's wedding.

While both novels depict how insurgents kidnap Britons, these moments of violence are aimed at gaining global and local media coverage. Nigerian and British news outlets spread the word about Isabel and Dan's abduction in each narrative. In this sense, terrorism is not so much the body count it can amass, but instead the message it can send to a wide audience which includes the West. Anti-colonial groups typically use terror as they are largely outnumbered when compared to their enemies. As in the Delta, exterminating the oppressing force is not always possible even through acts of

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devastating violence. Accordingly, Brian Jenkins argues that "While terrorists may

kill…the primary objective of terrorism is *not* mass murder. Terrorists want a lot of

people watching and a lot of people listening, not a lot of people dead (3; emphasis

original). Spreading a message through the media is a much more effective

accomplishment for Deltan militants as their ideology can affect the political and

economic stability of their home country as well as Britain's.[45]

In *Oil on Water*, the Professor's militant group responds to the callous treatment

of the poor by attacking oil company employees. Traditional eco-terrorist activities

produce some success for the rebels, as "in Port Harcourt oil companies are being

bombed, police stations are being overrun, the world oil price is shooting through the

roof" (64). Although the economic relationship between the state and its British partners

is troubled by these activities, the Delta's ecosystem remains a victim in this destructive

process. However, when rebels ransom Britons, the outcomes are much more far

sweeping and safer for rural Nigerians. As Rufus notes, after the kidnapping of Isabel

Floode

> some oil companies stopped sending expatriate workers to the region, and were
> even thinking of shutting down their operations because the coast was becoming
> higher than they could bear, and this possibility was already causing a tension in
> the oil market, with prices expected to rise in response. (101)

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[45] Most notably, in the late 20th century, the Irish Republican Army harnessed the power
of radio and television to bring attention to their liberation struggle. For more information
on this aspect of terrorism, see J. Edward Mallot's article ""There's No Good Riot
Footage Any More": Waging Northern Ireland's Media War in Eoin McNamee's
Resurrection Man" in *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2013, pp. 34–5.

Foreign occupation and the exploitation of the Delta is suspended as global media coverage spreads news of the Floode abduction. Habila's novel emphasizes how kidnapping is a much more viable and environmentally sound strategy for liberating the wetlands as European powers abandon their holdings in Nigeria. Additionally, the terror caused by ransoming has limited the supply of oil sent to the West and ultimately driven up the price of the commodity. This moment in the narrative consequently illustrates that the rebels understand how to undermine the economic and political relationships of a globalized world. By gaining the world's attention to their cause, the Professor's group creates international chaos that stalls European investments and the Nigerian government's flow of petrodollars.

These victories for the rebels are, however, problematic, as they place Isabel Floode in a precarious situation even though she is not directly working for ABZ. Indeed, it is important to question the efficacy of the militants' tactics within this scenario, yet when considering how much power is held by the state and oil companies, the Professor's group have extremely limited options to practice agency. Rufus covers the Floode kidnapping and questions whether the militants are "Gangsters of Freedom Fighters" (31). His concerns about the group's operations are alleviated, however, as he gradually learns how the Professor delivers his form of environmental justice. Initially, Isabel is taken away by her husband's driver Salomon as part of a false kidnapping attempt. But, this plan goes awry as Salomon's associates decide to put the ransoming process in the hands of more skilled operator. Isabel subsequently comes into the possession of the Professor as he intercepts the amateur criminals in one of the Delta villages. Upon

meeting the Briton, the Professor shows his concern for the operation and the health of

the woman: "Are they treating you well? I hope they are, because of they are not, then

they will be giving all of us a bad name. Kidnapping is not for amateurs, they make a

mess, people get killed, and when they do the papers have a field day. They call us

barbaric, and it spoils business for everyone" (224). The Professor takes his dealings

seriously as they affect the overall profit he can make through his venture. Rufus' opinion

of the militants subsequently changes as he spends more time in their camp and realizes

that the rebels create terror through kidnapping in order to bring more attention to the

group's "war for the environment" (226). As the Professor claims, "We are not the

barbarians the government propagandists say we are. We are for the people. Everything

we do is for the people, what will we gain if we terrorize them?" (232). Rufus' journey

to find Isabel Floode helps reveal how the subversive tactics of the Professor's group are

problematic, yet provide some form of economic retribution and postcolonial resistance

to the area. By kidnapping people that are valuable in the eyes of the oil industry, the

disempowered are ultimately able to leverage a system that ignores the lives of the poor

for the sake of economic profit.

Similar ethical questions arise in *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away* as the Sibeye Boys'

use of kidnapping both affects the global oil industry and local villagers. Dan's abduction

provides the insurgents with leverage as the Western Oil Company and local authorities

begin to comply with the group's demands. Once again, the local and foreign media

facilitate the work of the rebels as Dan's ransoming is televised to a global audience.

Blessing continually notes that throughout her village there as "large vans with satellite

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dishes attached to the roofs" (390). Nigerian, British, and American reporters interview

government authorities and Western Oil representatives. These soundbites and first-hand

accounts spread terror internationally and embolden the Sibeye Boys. Meanwhile,

Ezekiel continues the gang's work by bursting an oil pipeline in the village. This mission

goes awry however when the machinery explodes and Ezekiel and "over twenty boys"

(373) are sent to hospital. The detonation of the pipeline ultimately kills the young boy

while Dan is later freed by his captors. The fatal end to Ezekiel's life draws attention to

the problematic strategies employed by militant groups in the Delta. While these

collectives do indeed trouble the operations of oil companies through ransoming and

media coverage, the violent tactics used sometimes harm the very people that are seeking

retribution.

Unlike Habila, Watson provides a more critical perspective on the use of

insurgency and terror as a means for environmental justice. Ezikiel's death and Dan's

abduction expose how the resource war creates casualties on both sides of the struggle.

The aggression over oil is committed by male groups in the government, British

company, or local villages. This gendered dynamic of violence provides Watson an

opportunity to spotlight how Deltan women are confronting the use of terrorism in the

wetlands. Rather than continue the use of force, the elder women of Warri choose to use a

non-violent tactic to stop the carnage in the area. A collective of females use their bodies

in a subversive manner to persuade their community from working with the Western Oil

Company and the militant gangs. In the novel's final scene, Blessing and her

grandmother lead a crowd of women to the oil corporation's gates to encourage natives to

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stop guarding the building and abandon their weapons. Each woman strips off their clothes to show the "shame" they feel as the men in their village have succumbed to the same violent tactics as the state. Blessing's grandmother stands before the Western Oil guards and several news reporters to announce the assemblage's view

> We are being murdered and our sons are turning into murderers! No chance of future for our sons. Their only choice is kidnapping a white man, using violence. We are ashamed of our sons' behavior. We want better future for them. Give us our sons. Give them chances at jobs. Health, school. Let our fish live in the river and our trees grow. Give us back our sons! (401)

Gradually, the Deltan men abandon their posts and weapons to display their solidarity with the native women. The protestors' message also reaches the Sibeye Boys through media coverage and the gang eventually release Dan back to the safety of the oil compound. As Blessing begins to walk back to her village, her grandmother reminds her that "sometimes words are more powerful than guns. And sometimes silence is more powerful than words. It is the things that are not said that are important" (402).

The ending to Watson's text advocates for a non-violent form of resistance that prevents further harm to the people and the wetlands. This route to environmental justice suggests that alternative options – outside of terrorism – are viable for challenging the political and economic power of foreign oil companies. Watson does not imagine or prescribe that this type of protest is something that disempowered Nigerians should do to liberate their lands. Rather, women from the Delta have been using this resistance strategy to upend the daily operations of petroleum facilities. Nude women in Southern Nigeria have specifically occupied oil wells, corporate offices, and drilling stations to dissuade local and foreign workers from continuing their work. Sam Olukoya explains

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that this practice uses the female body to target cultural beliefs "as the mothers of policemen and soldiers it is traditionally believed that it would be an abomination for them to see the nakedness of their mothers." Watson subsequently acknowledges the ingenuity and power of Deltan women by illustrating how this group is able to stop violence from being imposed upon Britons, Nigerians, and the surrounding ecosystem. Like local militants, the women in the Warri village also recognize the power of media and use it as a vehicle to spread their message to their countrymen and rebel factions. *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away* operates in a different manner than *Oil on Water* as it presents how postcolonial women engage with contemporary economic colonization through an alternative form of resistance.

Beyond Narratives: The Impact of Postcolonial Nigerian Oil Novels

The Niger Delta has become a battleground in the globalized resource war where Western forces frequently dominate the people and environments of postcolonial nations. As a valuable commodity, oil will continue to be sought after by global powers such as Britain, the United States, and China. Consumer demands abroad will indirectly drive multinational corporations to maintain their operations in the Third World. While terrorism is being used to combat the West's neocolonial invasion of the Delta, the dispossessed must still live in the toxic aftermath of oil extraction. The exchange of violence between the two sides is therefore unequal as insurgents and villagers face ongoing environmental danger. Younger generations will also be affected by the despoilment of the wetlands as the delicate ecosystem will remain polluted well into the

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future. Many of the rebel groups are already populated by Nigerian youths who offer their lives for the liberation movement. Anti-colonial terrorism may thus prove unsatisfactory, to some extent, as poor Deltans remain oppressed by the past actions of their masters.

Habila and Watson's novels, however, are helping draw attention to the Nigerian oil crisis. While these texts focus on the economic and environmental relationship between Nigeria and Britain, these narratives have global and local repercussions. Western petroleum companies are currently exploiting other countries both in the developing world. Angola, Ecuador, and Trinidad and Tabago – to name a few – have all become new targets for oil extraction. Narratives about Nigeria's petroleum crisis can subsequently warn these nations to keep their resources in the ground or demand stricter extraction methods. Western audiences can be more conscious about how their buying power can affect the inhabitants of environments abroad. Divesting from companies like Shell or switching to renewable energy sources can perhaps change the conditions in the Delta. The political impact of these novels also demonstrates how studying postcolonial literature is vital in an increasingly inter-connected world. Habila and Watson depict the daily struggles of the "unseen" people and environment of Southern Nigeria. Without these authors' novels, many readers in developing countries would not learn about the oppression occurring throughout the tributaries of the Niger River. The way in which these narratives operate on different levels ultimately helps bring attention and action to the actual areas depicted in these fictional stories.

Conclusion

Colonial Nostalgia, Erasure, and the Global Consumer

In late August of 2015, the American pop-singer Taylor Swift released a music

video for her newest single "Wildest Dreams." Swift is internationally famous for her

songs about heartbreak and young love, yet her lyrics were not the focus of the public's

attention that summer. The singer's music video and its depiction of colonial Africa put

Swift under scrutiny for several reasons. A montage of zebra and elephant herds open

"Wildest Dreams" as the song's title is overlaid on shots of African animals running

through grasslands. Next, the image of a rising sun quickly dissolves into a scene of a

1950s Hollywood set. Taylor Swift is depicted as a forlorn movie actress who sings the

title-track to her uninterested male co-star.

Fig. 7 Colonial Nostalgia from Taylor Swift, "Wildest Dreams," *TaylorSwiftVEVO*, 2015.

The couple act-out various romantic scenes dressed as colonizers while different animals

and undisclosed African landscapes as are used as background props. Clearly, the video

is part homage is to *Out of Africa,* both Karen Blixen's 1935 colonial-era novel and the

later 1985 movie directed by Sydney Pollack.[46] "Wildest Dreams," however goes a step

forward – or perhaps, *backwards* – as the romantic imagining of "Africa" is completely

devoid of any black Africans, the atrocities of colonization, or any hints of white-guilt.

The subsequent backlash to "Wildest Dreams" was a global event as reporters,

social-media users, and scholars all responded to the music video. African authors

Viviane Rutabingwa and James Kassaga Arinaitwe provided their take on Swift's work

by stating

> To those of us from the continent who had parents or grandparents who lived
> through colonialism (and it can be argued in some cases are still living through it),
> this nostalgia that privileged white people have for colonial Africa is awkwardly
> confusing to say the least and offensive to say the most. ("Taylor Swift is
> Dreaming")

Many critics of the music video took similar stances by denouncing how the production

company and Swift's management team did not even consider the racial and colonial

politics of re-creating British-occupied Africa. Joseph Kahn, the director of the video,

publicly defended his work as

> There are black Africans in the video in a number of shots, but I rarely cut to crew
> faces outside of the director as the vast majority of screentime is Taylor and Scott
> [Eastwood]…The reality is not only were there people of color in the video, but
> the key creatives who worked on this video are people of color. I am Asian
> American, the producer Jil Hardin is an African American woman, and the editor
> Chancler Haynes is an African American man…We collectively decided it would

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[46] Scholars have noted that both texts are highly problematic as Blixen's novel portrays
Kenyans as "savage" and "sub-human" while Pollack's film completely erases the
horrors of colonization from its storyline.

have been historically inaccurate to load the crew with more black actors as the video would have been accused of rewriting history….this video has been singled out, yet there have been many music videos depicting Africa. These videos have traditionally not been lessons in African history. Let's not forget, Taylor has chosen to donate all of her proceeds from this video to the African Parks Foundation to preserve the endangered animals of the continent and support the economies of local African people. (Goodman)

Kahn's justification for his directorial decisions is problematic – for many reasons – as it upholds the Western tradition of white-washing narratives that take place in Africa.[47] Failing to note that genocide, rape, slavery, and the relocation of native people took place in colonized areas invites audiences to consume Swift's music without hesitation or recognition of the past. While Kahn notes that other music videos about Africa have not been critiqued, this simply exposes how re-writing the continent's history is a common practice by Western production companies.[48] The director's final attempt to defend "Wildest Dreams" mentions that Swift will be donating proceeds from the video to protect Africa's endangered animals and support local economies. Empire is once again absolved here by disregarding how European forces exploited and destroyed their colonies' natural resources and non-human inhabitants. Perhaps the biggest issue

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[47] Kahn's Asian-American identity does not disallow him from participating in practices of white-washing. Rather, his move to ignore Europe's atrocities in Africa display how minorities can become invested in dominant white ideology from both sides of the Atlantic. Moreover, the director's argument that people of color cannot be racist is troubling as it discounts how minorities from the West can indeed oppress non-whites of the developing world through various practices.

[48] This same issue is analyzed in the first chapter by examining Solange Knowles' music video "Losing You."

pertaining to Swift's video is that even in 2018, it remains an easily-accessible product on the internet that has been viewed over 600 million times by Youtube's global audience.

Consuming the Other explores how certain products and industries continue the work of "Empire." Like clothing, economic space, slaves, and oil, "Wildest Dreams" is another commodity that affects the agency and representation of postcolonial groups. Swift's music video, however, functions a bit differently as it deals with aspects of tourism and colonial nostalgia. The pop-singer's work subsequently maps out what topics remain to be explored in this project's ongoing discourse. "Wildest Dreams" is not a singular instance of postcolonial erasure or Western desire operating through consumerism. Instead, an entire African colonial-era wedding industry has emerged within the same decade as Swift's notorious music video.[49] The feminist blog *Jezebel* reported in 2011 that a white couple had a colonial-themed wedding in Mpumalanga, South Africa.[50] Dodai Stewart broke the story and described that the event had an all-black waitstaff that served Western guests in various settings that were replete with "actual colonial pieces from a prop-house [in Pretoria]" that included antique travel chests, clocks, globes, binoculars, and a Zebra skin.

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[49] Plantation weddings in the American South have similar problems as they celebrate and commodify the "good ol' days of slavery."

[50] The wedding photography blog, welovepictures.blogspot.com, took down the photos and information about the "exotic" wedding. The last name and nationality of the couple has not been made public, yet sites like *Jezebel* and *Africa is a Country* list the bride as Chantal and the groom as Dave.

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Fig. 8 "Authentic" Colonial Wedding from: Dodai Stewart, "Colonial-Themed Wedding Included Authentic All-Black Servant Staff," Jezebel.com, 12 July 2011.

A few years later in 2015, the American wedding-planning website Kate Aspen promoted the decorations and photography ideas used in another "colonial-era" themed ceremony in South Africa. Black Africans are absent from the event's photos, yet the bride takes the opportunity to wear "native" dress as part of her big day. In another shot, the husband dresses in pieces of colonial uniform while an elephant obediently kneels behind the newlyweds. The couple, like Swift, also pay their respects to Blixen's novel by placing their wedding rings over a copy of her text.

Fig. 9 Africans Out of Africa Wedding from: Kate Aspen, "A Breathtaking Safari Wedding in South Africa," *Kateaspen.com*, 26 August 2015.

Sadly, these two weddings are not the only evidence that there is a "colonial-Africa" wedding industry beginning to emerge. Google searches for the theme find various Pintrest boards that can help couples locate the "authentic" decorations and locations for their unique occasions.[51] Numerous photographer websites advertise their footage from past colonial-weddings to inspire would-be clients. It can be assumed that the target demographic for this industry are white Westerners that are either oblivious or unsympathetic to the atrocities that occurred in Africa during European colonization. The wedding would otherwise not be "authentic" if the racial roles were reversed. While the nationalities of these couples, photographers, and wedding planners are not always clear,

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[51] Pintrest is a website where users share images about certain themes or ideas to inspire one another to create artwork, photographs, or home-made products.

this ambiguity helps display how "Empire" is once again operating from multiple locations and through various companies.

The "colonial-Africa" wedding industry is particularly interesting in relation to *Consuming the Other* as it shows how Western consumer demands, imaginations, and money can recreate empire in a postcolonial setting. Black Africans are once again put into subservient positions to white masters. Or sometimes, native Africans are non-existent all together so as to bypass any mention of genocide or colonization. Topee solar hats, military boots, and Union Jack emblems are used to signify who can perform – or purchase – the role of the "civilized" colonizer. As such, the powerful Westerners must act out how they can conquer African people, animals, and landscapes in a series of photographs. Reviving the colonial past reveals how tourism fits into this industry as First World consumers travel to African nations for their weddings, but also travel back in time to fulfill certain nostalgic pleasures. This desire to resurrect the age of colonization is troublesome as it abruptly halts efforts in postcolonial progress. Instead of seeing African countries as independent, modern, and developing locations, the past is imposed upon these areas to ensure that Westerners remain in charge of the overall narrative. What else are these weddings if not just a rewriting of the postcolonial present? Swift's music video and colonial-era weddings help maintain the power of "Empire," white-supremacy, and global capitalism. However, *Consuming the Other* identifies that methods of postcolonial resistance are also in effect to ensure that the neocolonizers' wildest dreams remain elusive and unachieved.

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