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Undoing Whiteness: postcolonial identity and the unfinished project of decolonization

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UNDOING WHITENESS: POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY AND THE UNFINISHED PROJECT OF DECOLONIZATION

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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To the village of people who have supported my intellectual journey, just a few of whom I have the space to mention here: my mentor and friend Mary H. Webb; Professor Brinda Mehta, who told me I should go to the University of Iowa to work with Professor Anny Curtius; Professors Emery, Porter, and Curtius who generously gave of their time to support my growth as a scholar; Professor Claire Fox, who in a sublimely symmetrical occurrence worked with me in my very first class at the University of Iowa and saw me through to the bitter end, serving on my comprehensive exam, prospectus, and dissertation committees; Professor Nazareth without whom I would not have survived as a black woman on a predominantly white campus—thank you for your stories and your wisdom; my sisters Dr. Wanda Raiford and Dr. Notai Mack-Washington whose generosity, wisdom, humor, and friendship lit my way; my family; and most important, Arthur, Charnette, and Khalid Baker, whose love, vision, and total support is the ground of my past, present, and future successes.

To puncture and deflate the fictions of whiteness will require an entirely different regime of desire, new approaches in the constitution of material, aesthetic and symbolic capital, and another discourse on value, on what matters and why. . . . Invoking Frantz Fanon . . . and countless others will come to nothing if this ethics of *becoming-with-others* is not the cornerstone of the new cycle of struggles. There will be no plausible critique of whiteness, white privilege, white monopoly capitalism that does not start from the assumption that whiteness has become this accursed part of ourselves we are deeply attached to, in spite of it threatening our own very future well-being.

Achille Mbembe
"Achille Mbembe on the State of South African Political Life"

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ABSTRACT

In my dissertation project, I engage in a discursive analysis of whiteness to examine how it influences postcolonial modes of self-styling. Critical whiteness studies often focuses on representations of whiteness in the West as well as on whiteness as physical—as white bodies and white people. I focus on representations and functions of whiteness outside of the West, particularly in relation to issues of belonging and modes of postcolonial identification. I examine Anglophone African literary representations of whiteness from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to query how whiteness both enables and undermines anticolonial consciousness. A central question I examine is, How does whiteness as a symbolic manifestation function to constitute postcolonial African identification? Scholarship on the topic of subjectivity and liberation needs to explicitly examine how whiteness intersects with key notions of modernity, such as race, class, progress, and self-determination. Through an examination of postcolonial African literary representations of whiteness, I aim to examine the aspirations, unpacked stereotypes, and fears that move us as readers and hail us as human subjects. Ultimately, through this work, I grapple with the question of identification, understood as the system of desires, judgments, images, and performances that constitute our experiences of being human. I begin by looking backward at the satirical play "The Blinkards," written in 1915 in the context of British colonization of the Gold Coast in West Africa (present-day Ghana), to develop an understanding of postcolonial identification that includes an examination of the artistic expression of a writer conceptualizing liberation through the concept of cultural nationalism. I go on to examine a selection postcolonial African literatures to

develop an understanding of how racialized socio-cultural realities constitute forms of self-hood in post-independence contexts.

I hope to use my argument about representations of whiteness in African literatures to open up questions fundamental to contemporary theories of identification in postcolonial contexts, as well as to make a philosophical argument about the ethics of whiteness as it undergirds transnational modes of modernity. One main point I make in relation to postcolonial theories of subjectivity is that notions of identification are tied up in local, regional, and global circuits of capital and cultural production. In chapter 2, I look at an early (*A Grain of Wheat* 1967) and recent novel (*Wizard of the Crow* 2006) by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya), who locates African postcolonial subjectivity as deeply embedded in local traditions, myths, and storytelling circuits. By fluidly mixing the contexts of the local, the national, and the global, Ngũgĩ astutely challenges naturalized conventions that position black identities and blackness as always inferior to whiteness. Ngũgĩ represents postcolonial consciousness as a space whose local relationships are deeply informed by global structures of race, economics, and politics. Situating African postcolonial identification within global circuits of migration, capitalism, and colonialism, Ngũgĩ engages the pervasive significance of whiteness through representations of sickness and desire, suggesting that postcolonial identification is performed through beliefs and practices that are situated within a global racial hierarchy.

From there I go on to analyze a contemporary short story cycle by post-apartheid generation South African writer Siphiwo Mahala. Through his work, I continue to explore the issue of performative identification constituted through desire and aspirational notions in which whiteness works as a moving signifier of cultural, emotional, and social capital.

The main question I address in this chapter is, What is the meaning of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa? Through this examination, I use my analysis of representations of whiteness to reflect on the politics of entanglement as a way to move beyond racialized and geographic modes of identification, to challenge conceptual boundaries that undergird modernity, and to consider the theoretical possibilities of a politics of entanglement in relation to broader issues of identification and belonging in postcolonial contexts.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The focus of this work is to examine representations of liberated consciousness in Anglophone African literatures—to analyze black liberated identification, particularly in relation to postcoloniality—in order to deepen my insights on subject formation in relation to race, gender, nationalist formations, and market forces. The main topics I take up here are decolonization, liberation, and theories of subject formation. I believe that through the study of African literature and postcolonial theory, I can deepen understandings of the black experience in the United States. Ultimately, I ask the questions, How is the liberated African self constituted in postcolonial literatures? And how can literary representations of African peoples' struggles for liberated forms of self-consciousness inform diasporic subject formations and modes of resistance within a global context? The aim of these questions is to grapple with issues of identification and ethics—to find new ways of being together in community. I endeavor to understand how to produce a decolonized, non-hegemonic self. The ultimate goal is to develop decolonizing practices founded in a sense of community and ethical responsibility for others. My thinking on resistance to cultural, economic, psychological, and linguistic forms of colonialism is informed by thinkers such as Frantz Fanon (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952; *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (*Decolonizing the Mind*, 1986; *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance*, 2009). By analyzing African literature, I endeavor to develop perspectives on black consciousness that are informed by African modes of knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION
DECOLONIZING LITERATURES AND POSTCOLONIAL IDENTIFICATION

And now this is 'an inheritance'—
Upright, rudimentary, unshiftably planked
In the long ago, yet willable forward

Again and again and again.
--Seamus Heaney, opening to his translation of *Beowulf*

Let's face it, whiteness is a form of inheritance and like any inheritance one need not accept it.
--George Yancy (8)

Whiteness is a central inheritance of modernity—a dynamic, living watershed where beliefs, symbols, aspirations, and self-constituting and affiliative practices that reaffirm hierarchical systems of difference collect. In "Whiteness: An Introduction," Steve Garner explains that though "whiteness has been conceptualized over the century or so since it was first used as terror, systemic supremacy, absence/invisibility, norms, cultural capital, and contingent hierarchies," it has no consensual meaning (2). From a social sciences perspective, whiteness has emerged as a "problematic, or analytical perspective: that is, a way of formulating questions about social relations" (Garner 3). Recent interest in whiteness studies has focused on whiteness as a racialized identification invested in white bodies, white communities, and white culture as a way to understand larger contemporary racial systems, typically in the United States and the European Union (Jensen 21). This work also relates whiteness to the "hierarchical distribution of power and wealth" that occurs on a global scale (Jensen 23). A key question of this kind of work becomes "Why do white people hold onto themselves as white" (Jensen 25)? These investigations frame whiteness variably as a norm and a mode of superiority or supremacy. In "The Reproduction of Whiteness: Race and the Regulation of the Gendered Body," Alison Bailey and Jacquelyn Zita write, "A small

number of philosophers, critical race theorists, postcolonial theorists, social historians, and cultural studies scholars have revisited and reexamined questions of race and identity with an analysis that now focuses on historical studies of racial formation and the deconstruction of whiteness as an unmarked privilege-granting category and system of dominance" (vii). The authors define

> whiteness as a cultural disposition and ideology held in place by specific political, social, moral, aesthetic, epistemic, metaphysical, economic, legal, and historical conditions, crafted to preserve white identity and relations of white supremacy (Mills 2003). In this way, whiteness studies is a conscious attempt to think critically about how white supremacy continues to operate systemically, and sometimes unconsciously, as a global colonizing force. (vii)

A key focus of this work is antiracist in nature—to end racism by ending whiteness as practiced by white peoples. In this frame, nonwhites are seen as the victims of whiteness or objects produced through the work of whiteness.

In response to and running concurrently with such work is work that focuses on whiteness in the black imaginary; the bulk of published work circulating in this vein is by African Americans, again maintaining a focus on Western perceptions. For example, in *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, George Yancy notes how whiteness has been defined variably as a norm and a form of power, such as white domination and white supremacy (Yancy 7). This power can be generative, what Yancy calls "value-creating power" and performative in that it functions to construct reality (11). Yancy notes that it can also be a form of property—whiteness authorizes property within settler and larger colonial systems of domination as well as within the institution of slavery. This power can also be destructive and can come in the form of violence or terror, including the violence of the social ontology of white

supremacy or political or social forms of exclusion that, for Yancy, ultimately render blackness as invisible within a visual economy of the hypervisibility of whiteness. Yancy argues that whiteness functions within "a dynamic process of relationality" that marks the black and white body in relation to each other (13). Within this framework, black invisibility and white hypervisibility lead to alienated forms of both black and white selfhood. Yancy notes "the social ontology of whiteness has created and sustained a form of interpersonal distance" (9). Given the complex and variable forms the concept of whiteness can take, Yancy defines it broadly as a pervasive, systemic assemblage—"an ensemble of power relations" (Yancy 6). Yancy writes,

> Whiteness remains a synergistic system of transversal relationships of privileges, norms, rights, modes of self-perception and the perception of others, unquestioned presumptions, deceptions, beliefs, "truths," behaviors, advantages, modes of comportment, and sites of power and hegemony that benefit whites individually and institutionally (8).

Building on Foucault, Yancy defines this assemblage of power and knowledge as the discursive level of whiteness, which is related to its generative, sense-making and self-constituting effects. For Yancy, these effects are created through "a multitude of individual, collective, intentional, unintentional, isolated, systemic actions that synergistically work to sustain and constantly regenerate relationships of unequal power between whites and nonwhites" (14, 15). Ultimately, Yancy frames whiteness as a form of racism: "Whiteness continues to be a living, breathing historical construction, a social ontological performance that has profound consequences for nonwhite people" (14). Yancy's formulations of whiteness emphasize its performative and relational aspects and also created overdetermined locations for those in white and nonwhite positions. In my work, I maintain the idea of whiteness as discursive but aim to decouple the study of

whiteness from white bodies in order to move beyond the binary of white privilege and black victimhood and to think about broader issues of affiliation that undergird ideologies of ethnic nationalisms and racialized systems of identification. I also maintain the idea of whiteness as performative in the way it is used to construct representations of the self. In decoupling the concept of whiteness from white bodies I endeavor to examine how whiteness works in the self-constitution of black Africans as subjects for themselves.

The focus of my work is to look at how whiteness is invested in representations of black subjectivity by examining representations of whiteness in a selection of works by African writers. I am concerned with representations of whiteness related to practices of identification, self-styling, and modes of subjectivity. By *identification*, I refer to the both the external practices and performances and internal beliefs and desires that constitute one's sense of self. *Oppositional identification* refers to self-making practices invested in challenging and resisting colonial domination. Given the focus in postcolonial studies on the legacies of colonization, the development of oppositional identification is a key issue taken up by postcolonial discourses[1]. I argue that whiteness has profound generative consequences for nonwhites as a fundamental aspect of identification and self-constituting practices in Anglophone African literatures. Through my work, I endeavor to participate in the "long process of coming to understand whiteness and its claim on all of us" for the broader purpose of understanding the experience of being human in our contemporary moment (Nakayana and Martin xiii). I examine how whiteness constitutes

[1] For a feminist approach to decolonization and practices of identification see section two, "Crafting Selves, Reimagining Identities and Cultures" in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, Eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty 125–212. For an Africana philosophy perspective, see Richard Blirt, "Existence, Identity, and Liberation" in *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, Ed. Lewis Gordon 2031–4. For a literary theory approach to oppositional identification and politics, see *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Chela Sandoval.

this business of being human in order to ask if it might be-together otherwise; would founding our subjectivity in other epistemic orders allow for a more ethical modes of community and being together? My aim is to contribute to the theorization of postcolonial studies by examining how representations of whiteness structure characters' self-identification in *postcolonial African literary works*, which I define not chronologically but structurally as decolonizing literatures that ideologically challenge "the images, institutions, and relationships" that structure coloniality (Pierre xii). In *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*, Jemima Pierre argues that

> modern, postcolonial space is . . . a space . . . still haunted and constrained by what Brackette Williams terms the "ghost of Anglo-European hegemony" (1989). Indeed, the form and culture of domination established under this hegemony continue their structural imposition on Ghanaian identity formation even within efforts to reframe the contemporary national sociopolitical and economic order. . . . This is a living and breathing "ghost," . . . and race is in the blood and bones of its origin and its enduring legacy (xii).

Here Pierre identifies a central assumption of postcolonial studies: that the images; institutions; forms of identification; and social, political, and economic relationships that structure coloniality also structure postcoloniality. As such, decolonization—as a central orientational and aspirational framework of postcolonial studies—is meant to address this assumption and work to deconstruct and challenge colonial modernity, the institutions that constitute it, and the ways of being promoted and consolidated through it. All this to say: Decolonization is an unfinished project. Here, I explore one aspect of this unfinished project: processes of identification and the ways in which postcolonial subject formation continues to be mediated through whiteness as a discursive regime. By *discursive*, I again refer to the level of discourse—the rhetorical strategies used in self-representation; the

symbolic systems that support representational strategies used in the performance of the self; and the moral economies that undergird those systems, referring to which signifiers have positive valences and which have negative valences. In other words, the concept of the discursive points to the psychosocial space where we discuss, negotiate, model, represent, consolidate, and transform the politics and performances of the self—where we invent what it is to be a good, modern, civilized human being. Integrating all these pieces, I define *decolonizing literatures* as literary works that participate in the work of decolonization by helping us to reflect upon, challenge, and reshape perceptions of the self and self-representation. My main argument has two components. First, I position whiteness as an ambivalent representational strategy that functions generatively in making claims of selfhood tied to the key tropes of modernity and consumptively in grounding processes of belonging in practices that lead to alienation. Second, I argue that whiteness frames oppositional consciousness, resistance, and the concept of liberation in conservative ways that do not succeed in transforming a key inheritance of modernity: hierarchical notions of difference that give rise to racialized notions of the self. Given how whiteness both collates key signifiers of modernity and relates to practices that delimit practices of belonging, it is important to interrogate whiteness as a key aspiration of postcolonial subjects. Given the implications of these two claims, I maintain that the work of decolonization is far from over, that processes of identification are a key site of decolonization, and that making the ethical relation of the self to the other both the central aspect of notions of self and of practices of liberation is a productive way to address the fundamental problematics of grounding the self in notions of whiteness as presented in the literary texts I examine here. These interventions can serve to define the

liberatory transgressively as a way to find new performances of self and processes of identification.

In studying African literatures, I also move the object of study from Western texts and perspectives to texts that originate from continental Africa or explicitly from a cultural perspective that centers the African cultural experience, thereby making primary perspectives that have been constructed as the eccentric position or negative example from which the positivity of the center is defined. Literary and imaginative work and expressive culture on the African continent is a rife with representations of whiteness; take for example the Luganda song Omwana W'Omuzungu ("The White Man's Daughter") by the famous Ugandan singer Paul Kafeero. I present here a translation by Asaba Jessica and Manyangwa Mary Immaculate:

> Look at me, those who spit on me today
> Look at me, those who say that I drink
> I got a white man's daughter who very smart, very ripe, and very good
> If I may compare this to education, results were released and I got a first grade
> I'm in love with the white man's daughter who is as clean as the color of the glass
>
> Those girls who have been messing me around, I'm free from their silliness!
> They've been moving me in circles from one point to another and then another
> They insulted me that I eat jack fruit, but if I can win a white man's daughter
> I'm not coming back; I got fed up with you
> I didn't tell you but I had my own plans
> Don't come back and knock on my door; I'm not there
> Now I walk like a landlord; I'm looked after by a white man's daughter
>
> My precious glass, I searched for you and I got you, oh! (Barret-Gaines)

Kafeero's narrator leverages whiteness to gain cultural capital as well as to gain a form of property in the body of the white woman. Here, whiteness serves in the narrator's self-

constituting behaviors through which he gains dignity and a transformed sense of himself as worthy and powerful. In these lyrics, whiteness moves beyond the issue of why "white" people identify with white identities. At this discursive level, whiteness functions to open up (and delimit) the field of possibilities of this narrating self. Looking at representations of whiteness beyond the West allows for a more nuanced understanding of the functions and meanings of whiteness, specifically by decoupling the discursive work of whiteness from the naturalized physicality of "white" bodies.

In my discussion of processes of postcolonial identification, I utilize a psychoanalytic framework, pulling heavily from the work of Frantz Fanon, in order to focus on whiteness as a central inheritance in English language literatures. Specifically, I examine how whiteness functions in identification-consolidating representations in a selection of postcolonial African literatures. In these works, whiteness becomes a representational strategy in consolidating practices of liberatory identification. My use of a psychoanalytic framework emphasizes the unconscious and symbolic levels—the discursive. Psychoanalytic theorist M. Fakhry Davids argues that "psychic forces are not the only ones, or perhaps even the decisive one, that operate within our broader world; changing racist mindsets will almost certainly require intervention beyond the psychological" as well as beyond the symbolic, which is the main domain through which I define whiteness (15). Fanon argues that the level of the psyche and the level of the symbolic are themselves constituted primarily through economic structures, combining a psychoanalytic approach with the exigencies of a materialist analysis. I say this to emphasize my discussion of the discursive as one tool in the work of decolonization; this

tool is best used in an intersectional analysis that also considers how economic, political, psychic, and cultural spheres are entangled and co-constitute each other.

The works I look at here span from colonial to postcolonial and post-apartheid contexts. This range of texts to shows an anxious movement from representations that focus on whiteness as an external pressure—these are typically representations of the white man, the colonizer, or the settler—to representations that focus on whiteness as an internal pressure in self-representations of black subjectivity, as well as whiteness as an ultimate desire. This insight that colonial strategies target intimate spheres is not new. In his theoretical work, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o asserts that decolonization of the mind must be the key aim of anti-imperial strategies. My work endeavors to examine whiteness as a key representational strategy to challenge as part of the work of decolonization. Decolonization founded in independent nation states has not resulted in Ngũgĩ's call for a fundamental decolonization of the mind on the individual level. In fact, nation states organized around the idea of ethnicity or race seem to further entrench the ideology of color as "a coherent way of categorizing humans" (Jensen 25). My aim is to critically examine how whiteness structures postcolonial subject formation through the way it constitutes difference through hierarchical opposition; in this way, whiteness as a set of representational and epistemic practices undermines modes of decolonization that radically rethink key categories through which the self is constituted and represented in colonial modernity.

To provide evidence for this claim, I begin with an examination of "The Blinkards," an early twentieth-century satirical play written by Gold Coast author, lawyer, and cultural nationalist Kobina Sekyi to show how whiteness structures

oppositional self-making practices within a colonial context. The play is ultimately a moral tale in which the humor comes from the audience's identification with the text's absurd positioning of characters whose beliefs and actions imitate European practices. The primary trope of the play is vision; my reading of the play links whiteness to modes of seeing and understanding the world. The play focuses on the intimate interpersonal spaces of drawing rooms, social clubs, and marriage and shows how whiteness structures the epistemic assumptions underpinning practices of identification and affiliation in the colonial context of 1915 Gold Coast West Africa. I use this play because it was created at an early moment of the development of the protonationalist movement on the Gold Coast. The content of the play and its linguistic form, a mix of English and Fanti, speak to the multiple inheritances of postcolonial identification on the Gold Coast. The play suggests that whiteness served as an opposing figure through which Fanti identification was both consolidated and expanded. Fanti identification was consolidated as an authentic mode of being in opposition to whiteness as a form of false consciousness. Further, Fanti identification was expanded as an authentic form of African identification, where African is again defined in opposition to whiteness. Emergent national identity, as the dominant mode of anticolonial identification, receives its authority through the positioning of whiteness as a false mode of identification *for Africans*. This move renders national identification as a form of hierarchical, racialized identification in opposition to the notion of whiteness. On the discursive and symbolic level, Sekyi's representation of national identification conflates multiple lenses of identification, such as geography, culture, and race. This representation consolidates the multiplicity of local traditions, for example, on the Gold Coast both Fanti and Akan are dominant cultural traditions. The

satire constructs a space for the audience to examine the meanings signified by the trope of whiteness in practices of identification, a critical analysis of which reveals how whiteness undergirds the representation of anticolonial nationalist subjects and postcolonial subjects more broadly. While Sekyi positions whiteness as a form of false consciousness through his absurd representations, the most profound elements of his text point to something more dynamic in his representation of the hybrid practices of Gold Coast elite, aspiring elite, and nouveau riche. This hybridity is a product of the larger sociopolitical context, pointing to the issue of entanglement, what I previously called multiple inheritances, rather than that of false consciousness (137). In "Pan-Africanist Ideology and the African Historical Novel of Self-Discovery: The Examples of Kobina Sekyi and J. E. Casely Hayford," author Kwadwo Osei-Nyame quotes Gambian historian J. Ayodele Langley's description of this context, "West Africa was, with the exception of South Africa, the only region in colonial Africa where a nationalist intelligentsia of lawyers, merchants, journalists, doctors, and clergymen sought to share political power with the colonial ruler and took upon itself the duty of disseminating political ideas and values" (137). Sekyi's work suggests that anticolonial African subjectivity is deeply entangled with whiteness as a self-constituting set of performances. Osei-Nyame argues that Sekyi's work represents Gold Coast nationalists as hybrids:

> The portrait of them as disciples and agents of nativism, for example, exists alongside their conspicuous acculturation into European culture. They should therefore be conceived of as both products of Western European bourgeois culture and as people who confronted what they considered to be the negative aspects of this culture through the practice of oppositional cultures. The predicament inherent in discussing the early African nationalist is better negotiated by acknowledging the reality that his identity was founded as much upon colonial culture as it was upon his local African or indigenous one. (144).

Sekyi's text suggests the answer to this conflicted identification is to endeavor to demonize whiteness and embrace indigenous cultural practices. The play ends with the character Mr. Borofosem's speech:

> Well, I'm blest! Really, Onyimdze [a character who is a lawyer and is said to be most closely aligned with Sekyi's own political and cultural views] was right all along the line. If only we were national, we should be more rational and infinitely more respectable. Our ways and our things suit our climate. For one thing, our drinks have not the same maddening effect on our people as European drinks have. The people of the old days were wise indeed: if only we would follow the customs they left us a little more, and adopt the ways of other races a little less, we should be at least as healthy as they were. (Sekyi 173)

Sekyi positions cultural nationalism as a way to revalue the African past, challenge white supremacy, and structure a dignified African and racialized subjectivity. While cultural nationalist discourses, "which articulate visions of national identity through affirmations of a return to an African cultural self," may be an effective strategy to challenge white supremacy and ideologies of Western cultural superiority, they are inadequate to address the truth of entanglement and hybridity, which structure postcolonial subjectivity (Osei-Nyame 148). Discourses of opposition are inadequate in addressing issues of entanglement, hybridity, and multiplicity. In "Theatre and Social Change: Reasserting Traditional Values Through Theatre: The Role of Kobina Sekyi," Samuel Manaseh Yirenkyi critiques the conservatism of discourses of opposition, "For all [Sekyi's] alienation from western cultural forms, he could hardly be said to be pioneering any radical views. He was only changing from conservative Anglo Fante into conservative traditional African. . . . In calling for re-instatement of almost all African traditional values, Sekyi was not moving from his formal position of a conservative, he was only changing from one cultural stand to another," pointing to how Sekyi's anticolonial

position functioned to uphold the pillars of colonial modernity and undermine deep transformation (6). Moreover, I argue that such discourses are themselves structured through whiteness as a mode of constituting hierarchical difference. Still, I categorize Sekyi's work as a decolonizing literature because of its emancipatory impulse, "which aims to reject the dominant discourses and ideologies of colonialism and its prevailing notions of the Other" (Osei-Nyame 149). Through my reading, I would like to complicate nativist discourses' deployment of cultural purity and obsession with tradition to assert an emancipatory politics grounded in the concept of entanglement as a relational model that honors the complex and dynamic inheritances of postcolonial subjectivity.

Chapter two focuses on East African novels and the work of Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. I look at an early novel *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), which questions whether national liberation will result in emancipation, and *Wizard of the Crow* (2006), which emphatically answers No! The main trope of *A Grain of Wheat* is that of the seed or the grain, which stands in for that germinating beginning that is powerful and full of the capacity for life and also vulnerable and in need of care to survive. The nation state is the seed. This seed is the fertile and delicate flowering of emancipation after the end of settler colonialism. Ngũgĩ represents the liberation party itself as a seed that embodies the wounds of the freedom fighters and the ultimate anxiety that "the coming of black rule would never mean the end of white power" (*Grain* 17, 33). Literary theorist Simon Gikandi explicates Fanon's representation of freedom through the nation state: "In Fanon's thought . . . the consciousness of freedom reveals itself in the narrative and historical form of the decolonized nation, which function . . . 'as the symbol and the totality of freedom in a temporal and spatial dimension'" (*Maps of Englishness* 17).

Ngũgĩ goes beyond Fanon by attending to the psychic dimensions of freedom, which include the betrayals that constitute the nation state as well as key identifications with whiteness as a signifier of modernity. Ngũgĩ's use of one racialized identity as a stand in for the experience of attaining key aspirations of modernity suggests that the psychosocial, economic, and epistemic grounds of colonial experience are not transformed through spatial liberation. The key trope of whiteness in this text is external: the white man as a stand-in for settler colonialism, white power, and white supremacy. However entangled, although not yet completely explicit, in this image is the internalization of the superiority of whiteness and the inferiority of blackness as a constituting element of postcolonial subjectivity—as Fanon writes, "It is on white terms that one perceives one's fellows" and, more important, one's self (*Black Skin* 163). The weight of this discursive, symbolic level is how I define whiteness. Ngũgĩ engages Fanon's key concept of decolonization as the creation of new man in thinking through the possibilities of the nation state as a tool for emancipation (*Wretched of the Earth* 36). In a standard, third-person omniscient narrative style, Ngũgĩ relates African postcolonial subjectivity to black power: "Yes, Kihika had given him, a mere cook, a new self, by making him aware of black power" (*A Grain of Wheat* 24). In this work, black power is defined through racialized nationalism—a politics and mode of solidarity, identification, and affiliation "whose main strength sprang from a bond with the soil" (*Grain* 13). Whiteness also serves to ground identification in opposition—the other is a figural ground through which the self is opposed. In addition, as in "The Blinkards," whiteness serves as a way to bring connect practices of identification with geography, thus defining

liberation as racialized nationalism. These localized identifications and definitions of decolonization move to an image of expansion in *Wizard of the Crow*.

The central text of the chapter is *Wizard of the Crow*, a magical realist novel, originally serialized in Gikuyu, in which Ngũgĩ challenges the center/margin binary by creating a plurality of centers, a diversity of voices, a proliferation of versions of the story. Ngũgĩ' uses postmodern devices of using parallel and self-conscious modes of narration—nonauthoritative modes of telling—challenge hierarchical modes of being and of understanding the world. Ngũgĩ establishes this lovely narrative style from the first sentence—"There were many theories about the strange illness of the second Ruler of the Free Republic of Aburĩria" (3). Here Ngũgĩ asserts the ironic distance of the narrative's point of view, introduces the idea of versions of the story as a way to reframe authenticity as narrative perspective and undercut issues of authority, and uses the theme of sickness in representing African postcoloniality. Ngũgĩ's narration constantly circles around and undermines itself—calling itself into question:

> There were others who, to this day, are ready to swear that the illness had nothing to do with burning anger, the anguished cry of a wronged he-goat, the aging reign, or Rachael's tears, and theirs was the fifth theory: that the illness was the sole work of the daemons that the Ruler had housed in a special chamber of the State House, who had now turned their back on him and withdrew their protective services.
>
> It is said that the walls and the ceiling of the chamber were made from the skeletons of the students, teachers, workers, and small farmers he had been killed in all the regions of the country, for it was well known that he came into power with flaming swords, the bodies of his victims falling down to his left and right like banana trunks. The skulls of his most hated enemies hung on the walls and others from the ceiling, bone sculptures, white memories of victory and defeat. . . .
>
> Let me say as the narrator that I cannot confirm the truth or falsity of the existence of the chamber; it may turn into a mere rumor or tale from the mouth of Askari Arigaigai Gathere: but if it exists, simple logic proves that it was the Ruler's morning rites in this chamber of skulls that long

> ago, before the Ruler's fatal visit to America and any talk of his illness, had given rise to a rumor that quickly spread throughout the country. (11)

Ngũgĩ's style allows for anything but the working of "simple logic," eroding the twinned pillars of modernity—rationality and objective truth—working through the dynamics of accretion and associative meaning, undermining or perhaps revealing the poverty of accumulative logic, the ideological ground of colonial modernity and its economic engine, global capitalism. In this way, Ngũgĩ decolonizes narrativity itself.

As with Sekyi's work, Ngũgĩ's work shows how identification positioned against mainstream dominant norms of whiteness position an anticolonial subjectivity formed in negation of that norm—in opposition to whiteness. Both authors use the capacity of satire and absurdity to make critical interventions in our perception. Ngũgĩ shows that decolonization built primarily through the strategies of negation and opposition do not transform the key hierarchical dynamic of whiteness as a representational and self-constituting strategy. The form and style of Ngũgĩ's magical realist work moves toward a notion of decolonization grounded in the dynamic of transformation that move beyond mere opposition and negation. For example, the title *Wizard of the Crow* refers to a key character's transformation from a homeless man to a crow. This mythic image goes beyond Fanon's psychoanalytic frame of subjectivity, suggest a profound change in corporeality. After this experience, when the character becomes a healer, he takes the name of the crow. This experience of liberation and radical transformation is a key trope of the text that speaks to the issue of decolonization. Here, decolonization is related to revelation and expanded reality. In this text, black power moves beyond the image of the nation state and is connected to the diasporic connection of black peoples, which the

Wizard imagines during his flight as a crow. Expansion, deterritorialization, and the crossing of geographical and corporeal boundaries become key tropes of decolonization in this text. The Wizard, Kamĩtĩ, explains,

> Sometimes when alone, I feel out of myself—I mean, out of my body—and I float in the sky in the form of a bird. That's exactly the experience I once had. . . .
>
> He briefly narrated his flight over Africa, the Caribbean, and South America, and back to Manhattan, New York.
>
> Most of what I was trying to tell the People's Assembly was a slice of what formed within me during my global journey in search of the source of black power. (Ngũgĩ, *Wizard* 731)

Without giving up the historic-political ground of an analysis of the economic context, Ngũgĩ describes the source "in the unity of our blackness . . . when used to forge a sense of community across nations, territories, and continents in the quest for equality, social justice, and the fullness of life for all" (*Wizard* 731). Ngũgĩ mythical-poetic vision moves from the Fanonian decolonized nation state to an expansive image of belonging. Ngũgĩ uses multiple images of bodily transformation to replace the strategy of representing resistance through binary opposition or simple negation with the sense of moving beyond established forms. For example, the Ruler's body expands ridiculously, absurdly, to fill the entirety of a room. Ngũgĩ's images of radical bodily transformation point not to logical or conscious knowledge but to those modes of knowledge that only the body can acknowledge. They also allow for a challenge to the overdetermined meaning of the biological black body, positioning liminal identities as liberatory.

A key image the novel deploys is a monstrous image of hybridity that functions to critique an uncritical identification with whiteness. I use the composite image of the character Tarjirika, a member of the government's cabinet, having both white and black body parts to think through how whiteness structures performances of postcolonial

identification. Through this image and through Tarjirika's desire to be white, Ngũgĩ consciously deploys discursive whiteness—whiteness as an imaginary that constitutes African desire and postcolonial identification—and critiques the salience of white supremacy in the African imaginary. The monstrous hybridity invoked by this image critiques whiteness as an internalized, self-constituting gaze of colonial modernity without recentering it. Thus the image serves to undermine deeply ingrained desire of postcolonial subjects—what Gikandi calls the "other" desire. Gikandi posits the connection between humanist and postcolonial theories of subjectivity by asking postcoloniality as a discourse to rethink its positioning as a radical critique of colonial modernity by attending more critically to the actual desires of real postcolonial subjects. He asks, "Where do we locate postcoloniality—in the spaces between and across cultures and traditions or in national states, which, in spite of a certain crisis of legitimacy, still continue to demand affiliation from citizens and subjects" (Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claim of Postcoloniality" 628). Gikandi argues that "this *other* desire"—the desire for an identity outside of colonialism but within "the very logic of Enlightenment" through practices of subjection spatially organized by nation—positions postcoloniality as an ambivalent project that both reflects and endeavors to transform humanist desire (Gikandi, "Globalization" 630). Tarjirika's desire to be white is this exact other desire that continues to dwell in the heart of postcoloniality, the intimate homeliness of racialized practices of identification, and Ngũgĩ's work endeavors to allow the reader to look at—as if through a mirror—question, and transform the ways in which performances of African postcolonial identification are investments in whiteness.

In Ngũgĩ's theoretical work, he positions colonization as a kind of forgetting that washes Africa over through the lens of European memory. Tarjirika's wish to remake his body over as white becomes a metaphorical, literary form of Ngũgĩ's theoretical argument in *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* (2009). In the image of Tarjirika's body with differently colored and raced parts, Ngũgĩ ties together questions of power (possessed by the ruling elite), identification (the psychology that deeply affects how the governmental figures experience themselves, which is represented as a form of self-hatred), and memory (colonization as a form of forgetting, devaluing, and erasing the African). As a metaphorical figure of forgetting, this image suggests an ambivalent complex that marks both loathing and desire. Ngũgĩ's image marks a mode of anticolonial resistance through the desire for inclusion and access to the key values of modernity—citizenship, progress, dignity, liberty, democracy, and market capitalism—but also black self-loathing due to a belief in European superiority. Ngũgĩ's argues that the reconstruction most crucial to African decolonization is that of self-image—what Ngũgĩ calls the "re-membering of Africa" (*Something Torn and New* ix).

In the final chapter, I turn to South Africa and examine a short story cycle, entitled White Encounters, by Siphiwo Mahala. Here I move from an examination of satirical and fantastic fiction to the realist mode, looking at how whiteness functions in the representation of black subjectivity in this example of post-apartheid literature. My readings suggest that whiteness works as a structuring element in representations of the everyday lived experience in both apartheid and post-apartheid contexts. Ending with Mahala perhaps brings us full circle back to the geographical location of "the origins of human aesthetic expression" (*When in Africa*). According to the Chicago Art Institute's

site *When in Africa When in the World*, South Africa is where "the oldest identified works of art" are located. Here I examine literature as a form of art that creates space in which to imagine new possibilities. Creating this space is the work of decolonizing literatures—literatures that serve as a tool in transforming the effects of colonization. In Mahala's work, whiteness is central to understanding the postcolonial African self as constituted in post-apartheid contexts. Gikandi argues that black inferiority is a central trope of modernity, along with morality, rationality, and universal freedom ("Reason" 137). In "Reason, Morality, and the African Crisis," Gikandi lays out twentieth-century works, beginning with DuBois's *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), that are "part of a broad black questioning of the dominant belief that the culture of modernity was inherently bound up with the ideas of freedom and self-realization" (136). The everyday of experiences of Mahala's narrators engage that space of questioning, given their contexts of racialized violence, physical deprivation, and social exclusion.

The racialized modes of exclusion and separation that undergird apartheid ideology make the concept of entanglement a useful decolonization tactic. Literary theorist Sarah Nuttall defines entanglement as

> A condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited. It is a term which may gesture towards a relationship or set of social relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies human foldedness (1).

I first began to think about the entanglement of identities that constitute subjectivity in Anglophone literatures after reading Richard Coeur de Leon, with its anxiously repeated translated phrase, "I am a Christian, white, man." In this text, I saw the repetition of this phrase as a self-constituting strategy. Thinking about the importance of this repetition is

when I first posited whiteness as a key structuring concept of identification in Anglophone literatures. Unlike the generative work of whiteness in this medieval text, in examining the decolonizing postcolonial African literatures I take up here, whiteness as a representational strategy is ambivalent and is related both to the ability to make assertions of selfhood as well as to loss, negation, and the affirmation of African inferiority. All of the works I examine here address the issue of entanglement through the characters' crises of identification: the entanglement of British and Fanti culture in Sekyi's characters; the entanglement of African and Western (British and U.S.) culture in Ngũgĩ's elite characters; and the intimate entanglement of blacks, Coloureds, and whites in Mahala's short stories. Nuttall ultimately holds out entanglement as an approach that allows for the "deconstruction of a system of white superiority as a political and epistemological ground" (5). Her aim is "to understand literary . . . texts as sites in which the unrealized visions of anti-colonial projects continue to assert their power," again pointing to the work of literature in the unfinished project of decolonization (4).

Mahala's pieces in White Encounters point to multiple modes of entanglement. The encounter with settler colonialism is the key trope of historical entanglement that frames the cycle. Nuttall writes,

> Colonial rule is the result of the complex historical entanglement of indigenous and colonial concepts. By focusing on how disparate concerns were drawn together and, over time, became entangled, this approach enables us to elucidate the diverse and shifting interests that fueled colonial practices, and to reveal that it was never simply about colonial subjugation and anti-colonial resistance. (2)

The fraught nature of whiteness as it functions to constitute the subjectivity of the characters in the works I examine here affirms this sense of complexity that Nuttall points

to here. These texts position whiteness as an interrelated set of practices and assumptions in which resistance and collaboration are entanglement.

Through these pieces, Mahala grapples with racial entanglement by presenting everyday moments of intimacy, much like Sekyi's work. In fact, given the imbrication of whiteness with subjectivity, all of the works here focus on how whiteness constitutes intimate spaces in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. By focusing on everyday experiences, Mahala provides "an alternate route through the South African archive of whiteness by attending to . . . versions, within a context of long-held racist assumptions and practices" (Nuttall 14). This issue of versions also resonates with Ngũgĩ's self-conscious focus on narration, pointing to the entanglement of multiple points of view in the constitution of reality itself. The structure of Mahala's narration also points to temporal entanglement—as does the form of literature itself, with its complex imbrications of the time of reading and the time of writing. Mahala begins the story cycle in the apartheid period, with the stories "White Encounters" and "Bhontsi's Toe," suggesting the importance of narrating the apartheid past in constituting and understanding the contemporary post-apartheid moment. This temporal entanglement can also be seen, as in Sekyi's work, in the way that whiteness plays out in large part in how the characters relate to the African past, articulating theories of the present that are deeply entanglement with the past and future through the motivating work of resistance as a future-oriented aspiration.

"White Encounters" sets up settler colonialism as a primal scene of subjectification and racialization in Fanon's psychoanalytic frame. In the story, the 1820 Settler Monument stands in as the key metaphorical figure of Fanon's epidermalizing

gaze. Through "White Encounters," Mahala intervenes into colonial historical narrative by providing the alternative lived experience of the narrator. The key representational practices in both Mahala and Sekyi's work ties whiteness to tropes of watching, looking, seeing, hypervisibility, and surveillance. Like Ngũgĩ, Mahala also ties settler colonialism—which give rise to whiteness as a set of representational practices, beliefs, and aspirations—to modes of forgetting.[2] In "Bhontsi's Toe," Mahala grapples with the impoverished reality born through affiliative practices that rely on color as a key signifier of difference and identification. The title points to the synechdotal representation of a person as a toe and relates this to the use of color in affiliative practices, in which a person becomes primarily her color. Nuttall explains that "both colonial rule and apartheid were based on . . . the rigid conception of racial identification" and argues that the concept of entanglement allows for "ways to conceptualize a non-racial South African identity" (8). The final story of the cycle, "Hunger," is set two years into the new, post-apartheid South Africa and shows how the racial stereotype continues to define modes of self-constitution and affiliation as part of the legacy of apartheid. Mahala's work does not seem to point to a non-racial South Africa but to an issue that is more fraught, more

[2] For an analysis of settler colonialism as a daily practice of claiming space through renaming and a form of amnesia the authors call "mismemory," see Nicholas Brown and Sarah Kanouse, *Re-collecting Black Hawk: Landscape, Memory, and Power in the American Midwest*. The authors examine the use of the name of nineteenth-century indigenous leader Black Hawk in twentieth and twenty-first century locations across the Midwest to show how the casual appropriation of indigenous names inscribes colonial logics into the landscape. This argument is in line with how in "White Encounters" Mahala shows how subjectifying practices are inscribed in the architecture of the city and within practices of commemoration that also work as social performances of forgetting by reifying one official version of history. I myself grew up on the West Coast, near an exclusive gated community named Blackhawk and resonate with this practice of using indigenous names as a practice of ongoing settlement and indigenous dispossession beyond the Midwest. The authors' sentient argument about naming as an ongoing practice of colonization is in line with Ngũgĩ's argument in *Something Torn and New* about how replacing indigenous names with European ones is a key dismembering practice that disrupts indigenous memory and grounds experiences of alienation. These arguments are in line with the concept of temporal entanglement of the past, present, and imagined futures that constitute ongoing quotidian practices of settlement. These arguments are also in line with Sekyi's critique about "replacing whole limbs with borrowed ones," which I take up in chapter 1.

nuanced, more complex than simply giving up racialized identification and practices of belonging. Perhaps through the concept of entanglement "we can loosen the powerful hold" of the figure of whiteness in self-constituting and affiliative practices "by challenging the economy of meaning" it maintains (Nuttall 10). Ultimately, entanglement positions subjectivity as a moral practice grounded in empathy and identification—much like literature itself.

Theorizing Decolonizing Literatures

The purpose of decolonizing literatures is to engage transformative possibilities—to create the new—in line with the ultimate aim of theories of decolonization as articulated in the work of African and African diasporic thinkers such as Léopold Senghor (Senegal, independence from France in 1959), Aimé Césaire (Martinique, currently an overseas department of France), Amilcar Cabral (Guinea-Bassau, West Africa, independence from Portugal in 1974), and Franz Fanon (Martinique, contemporary department of France), who developed theories of liberation through an analysis of their specific contexts of colonization. These thinkers also write in the main national languages of postcolonial Africa—French and Portuguese—with Ngũgĩ standing in for the primary example of an English-speaking thinker here. Though each thinker is theorizing at different moments in their national liberation processes, all focus on how liberation requires transforming practices of identification when race is used as a tool of colonial domination. These thinkers provide insights into how racialized language is used in the project of rehabilitating the damaged modes of self-identification constituted within contexts of imperial control. In *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (1939), Césaire explores the methods by which the practice of colonial negation of the

subjecthood of the colonized produces self-alienation. In the introduction to the 2013 edition of the text, A. James Arnold argues that the "I" of the long poem comes to understand that "moral prostration and a diminished sense of self are related directly to the colonial process and its cultural institutions"; therefore, the text revolves around the painful, fraught experience of an intensely personal transformation that occurs upon a figured return home to what the narrator refers to as "the Antilles . . . pitted with smallpox, . . . dynamited by alcohol, stranded in the mud of this bay, in the dust of this town sinisterly stranded" (Césaire xii, 3). Within the first line of the reflective space of what Césaire titles a notebook, he includes the image of alienation in the form of a dominated homeland, a stranded Antilles, a rundown colonial town he returns to, which is located in an "archipelago arched with the anguished desire to negate itself as if from maternal anxiety to protect this impossibly delicate tenuity separating one America from the other; and these loins which secrete from Europe the hearty liquor of a Gulf Stream, and one of the two slopes of incandescence between which the Equator tight-rope walks toward Africa" (Césaire 19). The alienation is represented complexly as structural, geopolitical, and economic through an accretion of images that highlight negation, decay and blight, as well as through the subjective experience of "endless jitters, about not-having-enough, about-running-short" (Césaire 11). In this way, the alienation is represented as a collective experience of suffering; the narrator describes his race as arising from a "bed of boards" (Césaire 15) and recalls "the-old-saying: beat-a-nigger, and you feed him," pointing to the racialized violence that undergirds white imperial control and helps to position the absolute inhumanity of blackness (Césaire 25).

This sense of collectivity is fostered by the diasporic connections Césaire makes in the poem. The narrator connects his island to "Guadeloupe split in two down its dorsal line and equal in poverty to us" and "Haiti where negritude rose for the first time and stated that it believed in its humanity and the funny little tail of Florida where the strangulation of a nigger is being completed, and Africa gigantically caterpillaring up to the Hispanic foot of Europe, its nakedness where Death scythes widely" (19).

While Césaire's imagery is overtly transnational and historical, he also uses images of whiteness to represent alienation as a racialized form of negation. The narrator describes himself as "a lone man imprisoned in whiteness/ a lone man defying the white screams of white death . . ./ a man alone in the sterile seas of white sand" (Césaire 21). While this subject position is represented structurally through images of poverty, the anxiety of this subject position is described by the alienating vision of how "they (white people) love to see us (black people)" (Césaire 25) and the concomitant images of the grotesque, comically ugly nigger-body, the ever-present "big complicitous" nigger-smile, an overdetermined corporeality that will be repeated in the theory of Césaire's student, Fanon (31). At first the images present the abject black body as seen through white apprehension: the "nigger-smell, that's what makes-cane-grow" (Césaire 25); this image is negatively objectifying and also connected to the economic activity of a colonial plantation society built on sugar cane production. But the poem moves to present the more devastatingly destructive issue of this abjectifying gaze (that points to a moral and economic system) being internalized by the narrator when he refers to a man on a train as a perfectly "hideous nigger" and turns his eyes away in disgust, "proclaiming that [he] had nothing in common with this monkey" (Césaire 31). Here the subjective position of

whiteness is represented as an internalized gaze that causes the man who has escaped and return to dehumanize another black man and, therefore, himself. Through this experience, the narrator connects all the decadent images of his town (itself connected to larger geopolitical spaces of America, Europe, and Africa) to his own "face of mud" (31). Apprehending the other man as a hideous nigger completely without human dignity—as not a man but rather as a monkey—is also a negation of the narrator's own self. Given this new awareness, the narrator asks to be remade, again marking practices of identification as a key site of decolonization.

On a discursive level, the association, conflation, and consolidation of whiteness and morality underwrites the abjectness of black identification. Noting where the narrator uses "us" provides a clear vision of the abject positioning of his racialized identification. Césaire writes

> And this land screamed for centuries that we are bestial brutes . . . that we are walking compost hideously promising tender cane and silky cotton and they would brand us with red-hot irons and we would sleep in our own excrement and they would sell us on the town square . . . and this land was calm, tranquil, repeating that the spirit of the Lord was in its acts. (27, 29)

After setting up the dismally decaying colonial city to which the narrator returns, its poverty and stench, and the dismally oppressed and suffering race to which he belongs and its history of enslavement, he presents the rhetoric of morality that undergirds colonial control. The poem's ending gesture formulates liberatory consciousness as acceptance. Through the rhetoric of the poem, as well as through Césaire's creation of the

term *negritude*,[3] he represents liberatory consciousness as a racialized identification—affirmation and acceptance of being black. He writes,

> I accept . . . I accept . . . totally, without reservation . . .
> my race that no ablution of hyssop mixed with lilies could purify . . .
> I accept. I accept.
> and the flogged nigger saying "Forgive me master"
> and the twenty-nine legal blows of the whip . . .
> and the fleur de lys flowing from the red iron into the fat of my shoulder (Césaire 45).

The first two lines evoke biblical passages. Césaire scholar Lilyan Kesteloot argues that the first is related to the gospel of Luke (22:42): "not my will, but thine, be done" and a sense of faithful submission to authority (Césaire 64). Translators A. James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman argue that the second echoes Psalm 51:7: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Césaire 64). This line brings in the image of whiteness and its relation to purity. Through this use of biblical symbolism Césaire evokes the relation of whiteness to moral value, again presenting the rhetoric of morality that undergirds the deployment of whiteness in colonial discourse. The symbolic morality of whiteness is imbricated with practices of identification that tie black identification to immorality.

The imbrication of the discourses of morality and imperial control co-constitute black subjection as Césaire presents it. On the material level, the violence of imperial control, codified in practices of corporeal punishment, underwrites the abjection of black identification, which is further consolidated through the association and conflation of whiteness with moral purity. Through the image of the lily ("fleur de lys"), Césaire ties

[3]Césaire was the first to use the term "negritude" in *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (Irele 203).

together symbols of monarchic imperial control and religious authority. Literary and cultural critic F. Abiola Irele argues that the lily is "the emblem of the Bourbon monarch in France" (Césaire 65). Under Bourbon rule, the juridical and political institutions of the French imperial nation-state developed; Catholicism was installed through edict as the official state religion of France; French colonization began in Martinique; enslaved Africans were introduced to the island; France reached its monarchical/imperial heights; and the Black Code was adopted, codifying the racialized structure of the French colonial project, the imbrication of this project with the institution of the Catholic church, and the racialized subjection that would define slavery in the French American colonies ("Capetian Dynasty"; Watts; "The Code Noir")[4]. This collusion of church and state in the

[4] The Black Code was adopted in 1685, 50 years after the beginning of French colonization in Martinique ("The Code Noir"). The first article of the edict King Louis XIII called for the expulsion of all Jews from the French colonies in the Americas: "We enjoin all of our officers to chase from our islands all the Jews who have established residence there. As with all declared enemies of Christianity, we command them to be gone within three months of the day of issuance of the present [order], at the risk of confiscation of their persons and their goods." The code also served as vehicle to consolidate the power of the Catholic Church in the French empire; the ever changing allegiances between Catholicism and Protestantism being the central issue that dogged the House of Bourbon and allowed for its ascension to the French throne. The code was, in fact, framed as necessary to "maintain the discipline of the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith in the islands" ("The Code Noir"). It required all enslaved people in the French American colonies to be educated in Catholicism and defined methods of subjugation, the juridical status, and acceptable practices of corporeal punishment. Here I include some relevant articles to illuminate the imbrication of the French colonial project in the Americas with moral and religious discourse: "Article II. All slaves that shall be in our islands shall be baptized and instructed in the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith. We enjoin the inhabitants who shall purchase newly-arrived Negroes to inform the Governor and Intendant of said islands of this fact within no more than eight days, or risk being fined an arbitrary amount. They shall give the necessary orders to have them instructed and baptized within a suitable amount of time.

Article III. We forbid any religion other than the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith from being practiced in public. We desire that offenders be punished as rebels disobedient of our orders. We forbid any gathering to that end, which we declare to be conventicle, illegal, and seditious, and subject to the same punishment as would be applicable to the masters who permit it or accept it from their slaves.

Article IV. No persons assigned to positions of authority over Negroes shall be other than a member of the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith, and the master who assigned these persons shall risk having said Negroes confiscated, and arbitrary punishment levied against the persons who accepted said position of authority.

Article V. We forbid our subjects who belong to the so-called "reformed" religion from causing any trouble or unforeseen difficulties for our other subjects or even for their own slaves in the free exercise of the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith, at the risk of exemplary punishment.

Article VI. We enjoin all our subjects, of whatever religion and social status they may be, to observe Sundays and the holidays that are observed by our subjects of the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic

French colonial project sheds some light on the historical significance of Césaire's assertion in the poem that moral discourse and the assumption of moral rightness authorized French colonialism. The practices of corporal punishment laid out in the code, such as the whip and the fleur de lys[5], speak to the importance of practices of marking the body as property in the subjection of enslaved persons. Césaire's images lay out the racializing nature of these practices both for colonial subjects and for the rise of nationalism as a form of racialized identification. Césaire presents the colonial venture as a racializing project through a system of images that combine biblical allusions with images of infirmity to lay out the imbrication of religious and state symbolism in the marking of the enslaved body as black (read as physically and morally infirm[6]) against the whiteness (read as moral superiority) of the colonial master. Césaire's poetics work to resist the racializing ideologies that were systematized in nineteenth-century French thought as a discursive assemblage of biological (scientific), juridical, social, cultural,

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Faith. We forbid them to work, nor make their slaves work, on said days, from midnight until the following midnight. They shall neither cultivate the earth, manufacture sugar, nor perform any other work, at the risk of a fine and an arbitrary punishment against the masters, and of confiscation by our officers of as much sugar worked by said slaves before being caught.

Article VIII. We declare that our subjects who are not of the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith, are incapable of contracting a valid marriage in the future. We declare any child born from such unions to be bastards, and we desire that said marriages be held and reputed, and to hold and repute, as actual concubinage." ("The Code Noir").

In terms of other practices of subjection, the code defined a slave through the mother's condition such that children of free men and enslaved mothers were slaves. ("The Code Noir").

[5] The "fleur de lys" refers to the practice of branding recaptured runaway enslaved Africans with the mark of a lily, the symbol of the monarchy as well as a religious symbol of the Holy Trinity: "Article XXXVIII. The fugitive slave who has been on the run for one month from the day his master reported him to the police, shall have his ears cut off and shall be branded with a *fleur de lys* on one shoulder. If he commits the same infraction for another month, again counting from the day he is reported, he shall have his hamstring cut and be branded with a *fleur de lys* on the other shoulder. The third time, he shall be put to death. (Césaire 65, "The Code Noir").

[6] For example, "my race pitted with blemishes . . ./my queen of spittle and leprosy/my queen of whips and scrofula/ my queen of squama and chloasma." Here again we see both illness and images of corporeal violence that ground colonial subjection. (Césaire 45).

political, and religious concepts[7]. Thus, Césaire builds up to the poem's turn on the pivot of acceptance by developing a system of images that connect the concept of liberation to the rejection of internalized identification with French colonial processes of subjection[8], which entrenched racialized identification by systematically (juridically, physically, symbolically) subordinating blacks to whites.

In Césaire's aesthetic grammar of decolonization, liberation is represented as the transformation from the good nigger-object who "must sincerely believe in his worthlessness" to an I bound to others and to the universe, committed to struggle—bound, free, entangled (Césaire 51). Césaire ends the poem,

> Embrace me unto furious us
> Embrace, embrace us . . .
> Embrace, my purity mingles with your purity
> So then embrace! . . .
> our multicolored purities.
> And bind, bind me without remorse . . .
> Bind my black vibration to the very navel of the world
> Bind, bind me, bitter brotherhood
> Then strangling me with your lasso of stars
> rise, Dove
> rise
> rise
> rise
> I follow you who are imprinted on my ancestral white cornea . . .
> And the great black hole where a moon again I wanted to drown
> It is there I will now fish
> The malevolent tongue of the night in its still veriticity! (Césaire 55, 57)

[7] Here we see Césaire's aesthetic grammar creating a racialized discourse by assembling biological, cultural, political, communal and psychic concepts: "and the determination of my biology not a prisoner to a facial angle, to a type of hair, to a well-flattened nose, to a clearly melanian coloring, and negritude, no longer a cephalic index, or plasma, or soma, but measured by the compass of suffering." (Césaire 47).

[8] Identification is targeted as the site of decolonization in order to transform the alienation created through colonial subjection: "and the Negro every day more base, more cowardly, more sterile, less profound, more spilled out of himself, more separated from himself, more wily with himself, less immediate to himself." (Césaire 47).

Structurally, the poems sets an image of light—the "Au bout du petit matin" of first line[9], translated as "At the beginning of the first light" but literally including *matin* or morning—in opposition to an image of darkness with the night of the last line (Césaire 3). This dark night is paired with the "great black hole" to do profound work. It invests the image of darkness with sublime cosmological import and performs a gesture of transformation by turning the sense of a large hole or lack into a spacetime/existential conception that points to the origins of the phenomenal universe connecting the image of the oppressed black masses to the great celestial body and libratory sense of the moon, enacting a gesture of rebalancing not to bring the sense of darkness closer to the light but through the astronomical image of the black hole to connect the sense of self and group to value measures outside of colonial modernity. While the imagery is still racialized, it is a move to ground the properties of the self in a more correct and fundamental reference point than whiteness—a black hole itself being defined as a space of densely packed matter where gravity's pull is so strong that not even light can escape (Smith and NASA; van der Marcel, Verdoes Kleijn, and Schaller). Through this image, which binds together the sense of matter/energy/time/space, the hole is moved away from its sense of negation to a powerful force of overcoming—that hole in which the narrator would once have drowned, that hole of immobility from which nothing can escape, is now that from which the narrator takes sustenance. Through the poem's development, liberation gets figured as a transformation of alienation, stuckness, or still verticity ("immobile verrition") into motion, agency, intention, and future-oriented action—grounding us in a moral system

[9] "At the end of the first light burgeoning with frail coves the hungry Antilles, the Antilles pitted with smallpox, the Antilles dynamited by alcohol, stranded in the mud of this bay, in the dust of this town sinisterly stranded" (Césaire 3).

that is not hierarchical and human but cosmic, primal, and profound (Césaire 56). Through the poem's system of images, this motion is figured as the psychological gesture of acceptance and the physical embodiment of dance[10] that allows for new forms of affective rather than racialized affiliation, subjection, and boundness. The cosmological imagery opposes a sense of a natural subject, codified in the Black Code as the opposite of a slave, to a conception of a nature/existential, bound yet embraced subject at the end of the poem. Césaire's first figuration of acceptance seems to be an acceptance of the racializing project albeit a change in its valence from purely negative and negating to generative. The ending image embraces and complicates the racializing project by ending with a subjectivity that is bound to and together rather than a body that is marked in subjection. The ending move here renders the embrace as a gesture of motion and of binding the individual to the social and cosmic collective. Ultimately, this binding embrace is a confrontation with a racialized self, a realization of the self that signals significant self-transformation even as it reaffirms racialized discourse and modes of identification. Positioning this apprehension of self/collectivity/cosmos—or Césaire's holistic conception of negritude—as a mode of liberatory consciousness privileges the importance of a fundamental re-valuation and reconstitution of the self and collective as necessary to achieving liberation. Liberation becomes re-evaluation, changing an identification with shame and weakness into an identification with strength and awe. Moreover, in terms of showing how images of whiteness move from an external conception in colonial discourses of subjection to an internal conception in postcolonial

[10] "rally to my side my dances/my bad-nigger dances . . ./the prison-spring dance/the it-is beautiful-good-and-legitimate-to-be-a-nigger-dance/Rally to my side my dances and let the sun bounce on the racket of my/hands/But no the unequal sun is not enough for me/coil, wind, around my new growth" (Césaire 55).

practices of identification, Césaire's ending also stages this movement of internalization. In the ending note, blackness, or the narrator's subjectivity, is aligned with purity, a key cypher for the symbolic significance of whiteness. And this image of purity is proliferated into a sense of multiply purities, transforming the image of whiteness to be able to participate in black anticolonial self-representation.

Césaire transformation of the trope of whiteness in black self-representation moves it from the sense of an autonomous "I" to an entangled "I." In addition, to transforming the symbolic meaning of whiteness as purity into an image of "mingled" or "multicolored" purity, Césaire also engages this sense of whiteness transformed into a sense of entanglement in the phrase "white ancestral cornea." Here, an image of whiteness is used to represent an integral, corporeal component of the speaking "I" constructed at the end of the poem. In this way, whiteness is used as a strategy in black self-representation rather than as a way to represent the other, that which is outside of black subjectivity. This image of a cornea also makes use of the signification of whiteness as the domination of the visual in representing subjectivity. Here Césaire creates an ambivalent sense of whiteness that has both positive and negative aspects—positive in the sense of allowing for new subject positions and negative in the sense of affirming the ways in which white supremacy undergirds subject formation. The negative aspect is the image's relation to the regime of the visual. The positive occurs in the binding of the cornea—the organ of vision—to the ancestral. The ancestral evokes the sense of entanglement—temporal entanglement and entanglement with community. The image of the white cornea, the image of whiteness, is positioned as an image of bindedness to others. In the poem, the speaking "I" is entangled with a "you" who is

imprinted on the body. The "I" is marked by a boundedness to others—a binding "to the very navel of the world." Here consciousness, subjectivity, is not figured through the rhetoric of liberation but as a binding, a boundedness, and a submission. This binding is expansive temporally and spatially (liberatory?), cosmic in scale, on the level of the stars, on the scale of a black hole, evoking immense space and billions of years.

The polemical question that emerges from Césaire's anticolonial poetics is, Can racialized rhetoric (representing subjectivity through images of whiteness and blackness—even as they become entangled rather than dichotomous) resist and transform colonial oppression? In "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century," Léopold Senghor addresses this question and responds in a cosmic tenor that echoes Césaire's ending move. While positioning the racialized concept of negritude[11] as a kind of "instrument of liberation" realized by "rooting oneself in oneself, and self-confirmation," Senghor also postulates what is at stake in challenging the ambivalence of whiteness as it functions in black self-representation: that one cannot "hate oneself, hate one's being, without ceasing to be"—the insistent issue of resisting the self-negation that is concomitant with internalizing the racialized subject positions that undergird colonial modernity (Senghor 195). In his work of revaluing Africanness, Senghor rejects Fanon's formulation of inferiority complexes and repeats the cosmological self-confirmation of the I in Césaire's poem as well as the sense of racialized subjectivity in his assertion that "negritude is nothing more or less than what some English-speaking Africans have called

[11] Abiola Irele defines negritude as "the literary and ideological movement of French-speaking black intellectuals, which took form as a distinctive and significant aspect of the comprehensive reaction of the black man to the colonial situation, a situation that was felt and perceived by black people in Africa and in the New World as a state of global subjection to the political, social and moral domination of the West." ("What is Negritude?" 203).

the *African personality,"* which he also connects to the black personality (195). Senghor defines negritude as "*the sum of the cultural values of the black world;* that is, a certain active presence in the world, or better, in the universe" (196) that is grounded in relation to the world and others—the key repeating senses of liberation as activity, movement, and presence in opposition to the negation and immobility of colonial subjection are in play here, as well as a soundly racialized mode of resistance and subjectivity.

Positioning negritude as a humanism incorporates humanism's conceptual genealogy as a monotheistic, hierarchical moral system founded in Enlightenment reasoning and scientific logic. Even as negritude is a racialized rhetoric, its content, for example Césaire's deployment, moves toward a conception of being-with-others and affective rather than racialized/nationalized affiliation. By positioning negritude as a twentieth-century humanism, Senghor endeavors to transform the deterministic and binary paradigm in which Enlightenment ideology emerged into a twentieth-century paradigm that tries to modify the binary relationships that undergird deterministic thinking to move toward more complicated conceptions of contingency rather than determinism, subjectivity rather than objectivity, and instability rather than stability. Here we move from dualism and dichotomy to dialectic, dialogue, and reciprocity—in short, entanglement—what Senghor defines as "a network of relations" that is the creative, "centripetal force" of the experiential world—the imagery here evokes Césaire's black hole—a dense, primary force pulling everything to its center (197). Through this ontological formulation, Senghor wants to move negritude and humanism from a grounding in modernity to postmodernity. As with any such "post"-move, such as postcoloniality or postmodernity, much is reserved. Senghor's formulation incorporates

the major scientific and paradigmatic shifts of the twentieth century that understand material and psychic aspects as the twinned nature of reality and yet reserves the sense of a monotheistic, hierarchical, moral system situated in the "divided but interdependent world of the second half of the twentieth century" (Senghor 199). Ultimately this move is founded in separation and opposition rather than in a sense of deep entanglement. Senghor's positioning of negritude as a form of black cultural nationalism is constituted in the absolute difference of the African, in the position that the African "is different in kind from . . . the European" (Irele 204, 207). Senghor also espouses socialism, including an economic analysis of the world system in his thought, which provides a deeper critique of colonial modernity—modernity undergirded by colonialism and capitalism—as Ngũgĩ will take up on the Anglophone side and Cabral in the Lusophone arena.

Cabral repeats Césaire and Senghor's emphasis on the moral and personal, or psychospiritual, aspects of colonial control and the concomitant need for personal transformation to transcend moral and personal alienation. As a thinker, Cabral's anticolonial leadership defined Lusophone African independence struggles, such as those in Mozambique and Angola, and influenced progressive thinking in Latin American countries such as Brazil. While Cabral's idea of national liberation rested firmly on the three pillars of modernity—freedom, independence, and progress—his anticolonial thinking and writing complexly render national liberation as a political process; an ethical imperative, a cultural event; a process of individual transformation; and, ultimately, a substantiation of modernity that guaranteed the achievement of progress, security, dignity, liberty, and a respectable place in the international community. As a nationalist thinker, Cabral's aim for decolonization rested soundly on national consciousness, unity,

and individual awareness. Given his Marxist influences, he rendered colonization and resisting decolonization as processes with moral, political, and material aspects. Cabral emphasized the devastating effects of the ideology of European superiority and African inferiority that undergirded "the racism of Portuguese colonialism" (26). To reveal the essential work of negation implicit in this ideological orientation, Cabral famously repeated the claim of the Prime Minister of Portugal from 1932 to 1968, António de Oliveira Salazar, "Africa does not exist" (26). Cabral writes, "As everyone knew, Africa was the sickness that killed Salazar" (26). As a product of Portuguese colonialism, Cabral lived in a context that related privilege to disdaining everything African and revering everything European. The rub, in Cabral's words, was "even if [the colonized] adopted these attitudes they were never really accepted by their masters" (Cabral 10).

Ngũgĩ, in his literary and theoretical calls for decolonization, adds the additional essential piece that when the colonized do adopt these attitudes, they are never really able to accept themselves and, therefore, to achieve liberatory consciousness. This perhaps is the essential aporia that Ngũgĩ takes on through the trope of white-ache used in *Wizard of the Crow*. Ngũgĩ's use of the trope of white-ache suggests that an interrogation of whiteness is part of the process of decolonization and updates Salazar's sickness to suggest whiteness is the sickness that kills African liberatory consciousness.

The work of this diverse range of anticolonial thinkers—Senghor, Césaire, and Fanon in the Francophone African and the Caribbean traditions, Cabral in the Lusophone African tradition, and Ngũgĩ in the Anglophone African tradition—centers the issue of decolonization and the work of anticolonial struggle on the question of self-definition—What defines one as a person?—in response to systems of colonialism that define the

native culture as less civilized than the colonizer's. In *Major Themes in African Literature*, Africanist scholar Aloysius Ohaegbu defines negritude as "a provoked and passionate attempt by the first generation of Western-educated Black intellectuals to force the world to recognize that the African is a man like his white counterpart, and has a past and a culture not inferior to any other" (2). Here again we see the positioning of African subjectivity in opposition-separation-difference from that of the white man. This internalized structure of the white man as the implicit standard of measure is what I am getting at with my engagement of the term *whiteness* and what Ngũgĩ represents through the figure of white-ache. In Ngũgĩ's metaphorical figure, the vehicle is scientific, engaging the central paradigm of modernity's religion of science and the concomitant medical models of subjectivity, and bodily, invoking the symbol of disease—literally dis-ease in one's own skin and metaphysical, psychic, or psychological pain and disequilibrium. The tenor relates to self-awareness and the development of oppositional consciousness through the cure—personal transformation that builds identification on new grounds in dialogue with Europe but also with the whole world. This transformation is libratory in the sense that it repositions whiteness to not be the singular measure of humanity. In fact, Francophone African scholar Iya Kimoni defines African literature through its function to "rebuild the equilibrium of African personality on new grounds" through dialogue with African culture and "the world of technology" (*Major Themes* 6, 5). Black and white or African and white are no longer in opposition but in relation: entangled differences in a world of myriad social and cultural formations. Thus, the task of liberation becomes transforming Du Bois's binary formulation of double consciousness as the single most profound experience of black subjectivity.

Ngũgĩ's interrogation of whiteness in *Wizard of the Crow* contributes to this important effort of decolonizing literatures, theory, and aspirations—and maintains Kimoni's focus on mediation through technology. As an example of decolonizing literature, this novel proceeds from the assumption that hearing stories is a transformative experience that can shift attitudes, which are, in turn, related to practices of identification. This shift requires rigorous self-reflection, and decolonizing literatures provide a space for such anticolonial resistance work to take place. Decolonizing literatures function as the arena in which writers try to envision paths to emancipation. I place Ngũgĩ in the tradition of the decolonizing literatures of Césaire and Fanon because Ngũgĩ interrogates racialized nationalisms as an inheritance of colonial modernity as well as how contemporary capitalism and the state function in practices of identification. Ngũgĩ's representation of whiteness in *Wizard of the Crow* suggests that the examination and transformation of the psychological effects of racialization, in line with Fanon's work, is the very condition of possibility for liberation. As such, Ngũgĩ's novel participates in the effort to restructure the images, representations, beliefs, and desires (i.e., the affective economies) that position whiteness as an ambivalent signifier that authorizes representations of both African liberatory consciousness and its opposite, African barbarity, which negates black humanity. Challenging practices of identification that support the negation of black humanity and the internalization of negative black self-worth is the key intervention that decolonizing literatures make.

Ngũgĩ's trope of white-ache stands as a transitional figure in the trajectory of representations of whiteness in decolonizing literatures. Early works were positioned in relation to the encounter with colonialism, foregrounding the iconic, dislocating moment

of contact. Such works focus on whiteness as a concept external to African identification. Ngũgĩ enacts a provocative and enabling shift in perspective that, while still grounded in the relation between the self and other, focuses on the way in which that external relation is internalized and becomes constitutive of the self. In doing so, Ngũgĩ emphasizes the problem of whiteness in practices of postcolonial African identification. Through the discursive modes of metonymy and conflation, whiteness becomes a symbol of the constellation of founding ideals and structures that undergird modernity (progress, individual autonomy, national sovereignty, liberty, democracy, human dignity, market capitalism). As whiteness is further consolidated through modes of imperial control, such as colonialism, it becomes a form of racialized exceptionalism that structures postcolonial African desires and practices of identification.

In chapter 1, I analyze the work of Kobina Seyki, who is writing at the moment of emergent nationalism in Cape Coast, West Africa. Sekyi represents emergent anticolonial consciousness through its opposition to whiteness, suggesting that identification is a key site of decolonization. Using the rhetoric of authenticity, Sekyi's cultural nationalism uses a conservative deployment of whiteness as the antithesis of African identification. However, key characters in Sekyi's play "The Blinkards" suggest a much more fraught relationship to whiteness than opposition and false consciousness. I argue that while identification is a key site of decolonization, thinking through whiteness as a constitutive of postcolonial subjectivity rather than in opposition to its "authentic" nature allows for more productive modes of identification and for a being together that allow us to challenge rather than conserve the key categories that undergird racialized nationalisms and colonial modernity itself.

CHAPTER I
REPLACING "WHOLE LIMBS WITH BORROWED ONES": WHITENESS, DECOLONIZATION, AND EARLY CULTURAL NATIONALIST IDENTIFICATION

> Once mama said to me when I was about to go again to the predominantly white university, "You can take what the white people have to offer, but you don't have to love them." . . . She was speaking about decolonization and the reality of what it means to be taught in a culture of domination by those who dominate. She was insisting on my power to be able to separate useful knowledge . . . from participation in ways of knowing that would lead to . . . alienation
> —bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness" (206)

> By 1915 already the philosopher and sociologist he never ceased at heart to be, [Kobina Sekyi] insisted that society was an organism, living, growing, developing, evolving. It evolved healthily only if it reacted correctly to the stimuli from its changing environment. But in that process it never abruptly replaces whole limbs with borrowed ones, still less annihilates its whole self.
> —H. V. H. Sekyi, *The Blinkards A Comedy and The Anglo-Fanti—A Short Story* (viii)

In the1916 satire "The Blinkards: A Comedy," Kobina Sekyi presents the tensions inherent in early twentieth century Cape Coast elite identification. Sekyi is considered the first Anglophone playwright of the Gold Coast region of West Africa, which becomes part of the independent nation of Ghana in 1957, one year after Sekyi's death. The play presents two camps of characters: those who eschew all things African and try to imitate English practices in dress, food, speaking, and courtship and those who live in accordance with African traditions. The characters in the play represent a sampling of working-class, middle-class, and elite members of Cape Coast society, including a merchant; a lawyer; a doctor; a cocoa magnate; a policeman; fishermen; and their wives, children, and servants. The main plot revolves around the relationships between non-traveled aspiring local elites (Mr. and Miss Tsiba and Mr. Okadu) who go to the Western-educated elites (Mr. Onyimdze and Mr. and Mrs. Borofosem) to learn to be English, European, or white: terms used interchangeably to articulate what they want to learn from the insider-traveled elites, each of which has his or her own analysis of and relationship with English practices, but all of whom are intimately interpolated by whiteness. For

example, Mr. Tsiba brings his daughter, Miss Tsiba, to visit Mrs. Borofosem so that she might "make [Miss Tsiba] behave like a white lady" (Sekyi, "The Blinkards" 21). Mr. Tsiba implores Mrs. Borofosem to "teach her all the things you learn at London. . . . I have many cocoa land," he says, "I want you to make her English. . . . then she will eat nice European things" (Sekyi, "The Blinkards" 21). In its figurative conflation of English, British, and European practices to stand in for key notions of African modernity (dignity, access, progress), whiteness refers to the representational strategies used to simultaneously articulate the affiliative and economic structures that underpin key ideological aims of modernity (liberty, human dignity, and progress) as well as the crisis of identification engendered by internalizing a symbolic system that positions one's cultural traditions as inferior.

Sekyi's political and literary work presents the development of oppositional and liberated identification in the context of the dynamic commitments and affiliations of early twentieth-century colonial Gold Coast culture. The four-act play set in 1915 presents the various insider locations of the social elite and aspiring elite classes from drawing rooms to business offices and garden parties in Cape Coast, West Africa. The first act of the play has two scenes and introduces the key buffoonish character, Mrs. Borofosem, in her home, foregrounding the intimate space of the home versus the public elite venues of parks and social clubs. Act one begins in the Mrs. Borofosem's drawing room and opens with her male house servant wearing English-inspired servant's garb and sweeping up tobacco leaves on the carpet. Mrs. Borofosem's first line, "Look here, you idiot, what are you up to? Give me those leaves. You are too much of a bushman, beginning with the key issue of the devaluation of Africanness that constitutes

performances of elite identification and self-making practices (Sekyi 4). The remaining three acts have three scenes each.

Act two adds another private sphere by introducing the profound absurdity the characters Miss Tsiba and Mr. Okadu getting engaged not in the native manner but rather in the way they read in an English novel. This act introduces the public spheres where key practices of identification for the elite and aspiring elite are constituted through performances of whiteness, beginning with a garden party in Victoria Park, and explicitly invokes the issues of hierarchical difference, hybridity, and transnational blackness. The public setting introduces the issue of surveillance and the scopic economies that characterize representations of whiteness as the characters act out at the party and admonish each other to stop causing people to look at them. Act two continues to present the devaluing of African practices to develop the issue of alienation caused by condescension toward indigenous cultural practices in elite self-constituting performances. For example, at the garden party when one of the girls, Miss Akuma, is speaking to Mr. Onyimdze in Fanti, another girl admonishes her and tells her to speak in English. Miss Akuma responds, "What do you take yourself to be? Do you think, you who only learnt to walk in boots the other day, that you are better than I? If you like, let us walk together: do you think you are my equal (Seyki 56)? Here Sekyi continues with the key issue of hierarchical difference as introduced in Mrs. Borofosem's characterization of her house servant. Hierarchical difference is the key marker that constitutes the logic of whiteness. Seyki dramatizes the psychosocial issue of adopting English practices because they are perceived to be *better than* indigenous practices. Sekyi also explicitly introduces the issue of class in the conversation; in the first scene, the girls

relate Mrs. Borofosem's travel to England with being high class, while Mr. Onyimdze back handedly asserts that she reminds him of the lower classes of England. While the women's behavior—speaking in English, dressing in the English style, and playing games—is clearly lampooned by the distinguished and self-possessed Mr. Onyimdze, this character also ascribes to the logic of whiteness in his framing of (class) difference as hierarchical. In this sense, Sekyi's work poses a more profound issue than the one in which he explicitly aims—the defense of African cultural values—to reveal the conundrum of how the logic of whiteness structures the self-making practices of even the characters that are meant to be models of Africanist and appropriately nationalist thinking and of cultural nationalist thinking itself. Mr. Onyimdze variably refers to himself as a Fanti and a negro who has received mixed education in both the indigenous and English traditions, pointing to the multiple and complex inheritances that traverse his performances of identification. Further, Mr. Onyimdze suggests that his alienation is a product of his education in English (read unnatural) traditions and further genders this alienation. He states,

> To be civilized is to be made effeminate: your wants increase, and your contentment decreases in proportion. The civilized man is a product of man's discontent; but the student of Nature, the truly observant thinker, is one of the most beautiful flowers in Nature's garden. (Seyki 65)

Later, the character Mr. Tsiba uses the term "she-male education" (Sekyi 73). This language again highlights the issue of hierarchical difference.

Scene two continues the issue of alienation and brings in the sense of the ambivalence that is intimately tied to whiteness and English practices: the character Mr. Tsiba eats with a knife and fork even as he admits this practice is not comfortable for him, and Mr. Okadu is referred to as almost a "white man" because of his tutelage in

English practices under Mr. Onyimdze. Education is infused with the tension of the two negative associations of being feminizing and whitening. Scene three ups the ante as Miss. Tsiba's mother dies by falling down stairs as she confronts Mr. Okadu about disgracing her daughter.

The action continues to rise in the third act as the characters face the consequences for abandoning native values and traditions within various self-constituting spaces, including a social club and the pomp-and-circumstance setting of a wedding reception. The issues raised in the play are explicitly tied to modernity. In the first scene, Miss Tsiba becomes pregnant, her father asks a doctor to perform an abortion, and the doctor who attends to her discusses the issue of racialized difference:

> When you come to think of the difficulties I have passed through before I could have patients to operate on, you will get a headache. At first some said they were afraid, others said I couldn't do it, because only white men could operate, black surgeons being scarce. . . . When a white surgeon is unfortunate in an operation, nothing is said. If it had been a black man who had had such bad luck, the outcry would be loud and long. (Sekyi 87)

The second scene introduces the Cosmopolitan Club as a space in which members consolidate self-constituting performances of whiteness. The members discuss the practices that mark one as civilized: dressing in the English style, eating English food, and drinking English refreshments. One member reads a treatise that concludes: "To be a gentleman, we must imitate Europeans," and the members pass a code to dress and speak in the English style when in public (Sekyi 107). Given the accretion of meaning, this civility is also tied to femininity, giving it a predominantly negative valence for the audience. The issue of hybridity is again engaged during the reading of Miss Tsiba's wedding invitation as the full name of characters are announced, showing the (ridiculous)

mix of Western and indigenous influences: Mr. Aldiborontiphoscophornio Chrononhontonthologos Tsiba and Mr. Alexander Archibald Octavius Okadu. In the third scene, a member of the Cosmopolitan Club rejoices the blessings of being "modern born," in response to a fellow Club member exclaiming, "Ah! Cake is nice: all due to the white man" (Sekyi 113). On the level of language, the dialogue at the wedding reception becomes more ridiculous as the club members praise how European it is.

In the final act, the conflict escalates to the key issue of the sanctity of a church wedding versus native cultural practices, and Miss Tsiba is arrested for bigamy for being married to another man in a native ceremony after being married in the church without having her first marriage legally ended, meaning ending through Western legal processes. Mr. Onyimdze wins the bigamy case, and this conflict serves as a direct critique of the colonial Marriage Ordinance of 1884 (Baku 372). In the second scene, Mrs. Borofosem is attacked in the drawing room by her drunk house servant, who tries to kiss her, a form of greeting she had been obsessed with despite her husband's discomfort with it because it is how she saw husbands and wives greet each other during her trip to England. Mr. Borofosem enters and stops the attack but in his head chides her for introducing the custom to the house in the first place. In the third scene, Mrs. Borofosem returns to wearing native garb and speaking Fanti in response to the attack. She renounces her previous beliefs, and Mr. Borofosem goes back to wearing native dress. All the major storylines are resolved—native marriage customs are upheld legally, and Mr. and Mrs. Borofosem have gone back to native practices—and the play ends with Mr. Borofosem in his drawing room; he explains he is now more rational in accepting native cultural practices. Two men dressed in the English style enter the drawing room to get help from

Mr. Borofosem for the scuffs they received from falling down in the street because they are drunk. The men denounce native practices and praise English ways—the cycle continues. In the play, the characters who espouse English ways receive negative consequences, and the main transformation is the movement of the Borofosems from English to native practices. The overall condescension toward the characters who espouse Englishness suggests a policing of the nouveau riche by the old guard but without the old guard's consciousness of how cultural nationalism is traversed by the logic of whiteness.

Whiteness structures the way in which the characters in Sekyi's work position themselves in relation to themselves, their personal aspirations, and their social networks. Each character's use of whiteness—as aspiration, model, shameful comfort, or defining opposition—constitutes his or her personal identification and social position. The play suggests even more intimate functions of whiteness in grounding social position and a personal sense of savvy and modernity. The text of the play, written in English and Fanti, mixes cultures and languages, suggesting the complex cultural milieu in which cultural nationalist ideas were shaped—a milieu in which whiteness, a signifier or racialized violence, exclusion, and difference; economic marginalization; conditions of access, social mobility, and affiliation; a value system that devalues indigenous subjects, and also the very proof of modernity itself, both enables and limits theories and practices of decolonization.

The play uses whiteness as a symbol of opposition to Africanness in order to consolidate nationalism as a racialized mode of anticolonial identification. However, the characters' positions within rather than outside of whiteness undergird their ability to make authoritative claims. More important, the ways in whiteness undergirds the

characters' attainment of social positioning and belonging—the ways in which the characters feel deeply at home and comfortable in their performances of whiteness (even as the explicit message of the play represents these desires and performances as ridiculous)—suggest a relationship more fraught and complex that inauthenticity. The main message of the play comes in a line uttered by the character Mr. Onyimdze, a young, English-educated lawyer: "Those of our genuine Fanti old men who are proud in every way of their nationality are wiser, healthier, and infinitely more respectable and dignified than those who are anglicized" (Sekyi, "The Blinkards" 59). In this line, Mr. Onyimdze, who is Western-educated but prefers native garb, sandals, and speaking in Fanti when he is not working, articulates Sekyi's nostalgic vision in which respectability, dignity, and moral and physical vigor are used to underwrite a notion of nationalism grounded in a conception of authentic Fanti culture. Mr. Onyimdze says this line at a garden party at Victoria Park in the Gold Coast town of Cape Coast while speaking to a group of girls in European clothing who are questioning the morality and respectability of Mr. Onyimdze's behavior, asking "Don't you like English things? Why do you wear native dress? We want you to wear English clothes: you will look very nice. The native dress don't able to cover your right shoulder, so it is naked: it is not nice" (Sekyi, "The Blinkards" 53). Both the girls, who want to be instructed in "Englishness," and Mr. Onyimdze, who walks in the party sneering disapprovingly, "Just look at them," aim to police what constitutes authentic performances of elite identification: one grounded in valuing anglicized ways over indigenous practices and one grounded in critiquing anglicized behavior even as the character holding such a view is himself Western-educated and deeply embedded in the values of his cultural milieu in which Anglicization

is promoted as a precursor to having a successful life in terms of respectability, dignity, and access (Sekyi, "The Blinkards" 40). The emphasis on the girls' broken English develops the trope of inauthenticity and the sense of ridiculousness that characters the performances of the Anglophilic characters. However, rather than being dismissed as mimics who can't speak English properly or as pathetic, misguided fools who simply want to be white, Sekyi's characters open up questions about how whiteness functions as a conceptual figure in early Cape Coast anticolonial discourse.

In "The Blinkards," Sekyi uses the performative power of theater to animate the identity struggle of Gold Coast elites, a struggle which undoubtedly informed the development of his cultural nationalist thought. As an early example of the literature of West African nationalism, Sekyi's satire aims to reconstruct and uplift Fanti identification by opposing it to colonial whiteness; in the process, it critiques whiteness as an ideological structure of white supremacy. One function of the work, as a decolonizing text, is to shift internalized whiteness as the African subject's measure of worth, which requires resisting a larger colonial framework where the colonized's approximation of whiteness is an absolute good—in fact, the only good. In the early twentieth century, cultural nationalism is a form of opposition to colonial rule and black marginalization. It becomes a form a protonationalism—a way to cultivate black pride, black power, and black independence—that becomes invested in state nationalisms throughout postcolonial Africa. The nationalist thought espoused by coastal transnational elites grounded oppositional identification in the representational logic of whiteness. Whiteness as a set of practices, experiences—in this case with elite social spaces, travel, and education—beliefs, and affinities significantly shapes elite anticolonial identification

at this nascent moment of nation building, marking modern space as what postcolonial scholar Jemima Pierre calls "an invariably racialized one" (xii). The author's dual recognition of how fundamental whiteness is to the identification practices of the characters functioning within the elite Cape Coast social milieu as well as how uncomfortably it sits with a sense of Fanti pride and the ability to value Fanti culture and history marks the absurd structure of both the play and performances of whiteness. Given that the elite class is working out a new national form of identification marked by negotiations of respectability, consumption of luxury items, "showy tomfoolery," and the essential devaluation of the black subject, performances of whiteness define the dominant mode of elite self-styling and what Pierre terms "racecraft"—"the design and enactment, practice, and politics of race making" (xii). The satire in the play works to show the complexity and ultimate absurdity of the broader situation of fighting for liberation against the British in order to create an independent postcolonial nation but doing so through an identification with whiteness, an identification that undermines the value of the African subject. This logic of whiteness neutralizes the decolonizing impetus of the nationalist agenda by setting it within normative discourse rather than by significantly transforming the discourse and allowing for radical conceptions of tradition, value, identification, and relations with others.

Sekyi's cultural nationalism aligns with the major components of Pan-African philosophy[12], which include

[12] Pan-Africanism refers to the black nationalist project that began in the nineteenth century, which called for all Africans to be unified in a single state" (Appiah, *Africana*). Thus, Pan-Africanism is a product of key signifiers of modern identification in terms of invoking the tropes of citizenship, sovereignty, and the uniqueness of racialized identities. Appiah writes, "The Pan-Africanist movement began in the nineteenth century among intellectuals of African descent in North America and the Caribbean who thought of themselves as members of a single, "Negro," race. In this they were merely following the mainstream of nineteenth-century thought in North America and Europe, which developed an increasingly strong focus on

> Africa as the homeland of Africans and persons of African origin, solidarity among people of African descent, belief in a distinct African personality, rehabilitation of Africa's past, pride in African culture, Africa for Africans in church and state, [and] the hope for a united and glorious Africa. (Esedebe qtd. in Ose-Nyame 138)

The Gold Coast has an intellectual relationship to the roots of Pan-Africanism, which institutionally begins with a conference held in London in 1900 that includes an African representative from the Gold Coast (Appiah, "Pan-Africanism"). In addition, one of the most influential early Pan-Africanist thinkers was Edward Wilmot Blydon, a man born in the Caribbean whose parents are from the Gold Coast (Walters, "Pan-Africanism"). In contrast to Pan Africanism's clear ideological statement that defines nation, self, and other through a racialized frame and broadly defines issues of belonging through the concept of Africanness as a biological category, Sekyi's characters explore the complex and multiple affiliations and boundaries that structure elite colonial identification in the early twentieth century, suggesting the conflicted way in which anticolonial cultural nationalism uses performances of whiteness as a way to recast colonial subjectivity into emergent nationalist identification. In this representation, whiteness traverses Africanness rather than opposes it. While Sekyi's cultural nationalist thinking positions uplift and revaluing of indigenous culture as the key aim of decolonization and the anticolonial political agenda, a key conundrum Sekyi's work opens up is whether decolonization

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the idea that human beings were divided into races, each of which had its own distinctive spiritual, physical, and cultural character. As a result, the earliest Pan-Africanists often limited their focus to sub-Saharan Africa: to the region, that is, whose population consists mostly of darker-skinned (or, as they would have said, "Negro") peoples. (Appiah, "Pan-Africanism"). In this way, Pan-Africanism sought to fight anti-black racialism through engrained racial categories, a fairly romantic notion. In addition, the philosophical and institutional roots pull from a range of traditions, including European, North American (United States abolitionist thinking), and Caribbean (Appiah, "Pan-Africanism"). Finally, the philosophy is grounded in the essentially distinct or separate nature of racialized identification as well as freedom being contingent upon spatial separateness. For example, U.S. thinker Martin Delaney believed that black people could only flourish "in a country without white people" (Appiah, "Pan-Africanism").

structured through cultural nationalist thinking can allow for liberation that takes the form of a deep structural transformation. This chapter examines the dynamics of this question posed by Sekyi' representations at the complex moment that Gold Coast nationalism emerges to suggest a question that is still relevant today: How do we pull from multiple inheritances in an authentic way that fosters liberation as a practice of deep transformation that takes into account the tension between and within different traditions? Ultimately, I argue Sekyi's representational strategies and main themes position whiteness as a racialized and contradictory interpolation that supports notions of modernity but negates the ultimate value of the black subject—a negation that cannot be overcome by achieving markers of success, such as speaking English, travelling internationally, or gaining professional or social success.

The representational practices in early Cape Coast anticolonial discourse suggest the role of whiteness in the identification practices of the Cape Coast elite. These include practices that allow Cape Coast elite to oppose colonial authority. In theoretical discourse, this is referred to as the politics of activity—the politics of what the Cape Coast elite *do* to constitute their identities and create systems and relationships of belonging. Belonging is a dynamic process in that it requires recognition from others. This recognition is based on rules and expectations. Moreover, in examining Sekyi's work, I argue that whiteness plays a key role in identity-consolidating representational practices and modes of recognition for Cape Coast elite. In "African Modes of Self-Writing," Achille Mbembe argues that "contemporary African modes of writing the self are inseparably connected with the problematic of self-constitution and the modern philosophy of the subject" (240). *Identity-consolidating representational practices* refer

to modes of African self representation—representations that show what Africans do to establish their identities and a sense of self—and "self-styling" choices, including literary representations of African subjectivity (Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing" 242). Sekyi's representations of Cape Coast elite suggest dignity, civilization, and economic success as key signifiers of the proper African. More broadly, the discursive investment of notions of dignity and success with whiteness continues to be an important theme in African and African diasporic literatures[13]. Such characterizations suggest how whiteness is a key signifier in the self-representations of black subjects to themselves, in their performances for others, and in their affiliative connections. Sekyi's characterization of Mr. Onyimdze, whose Western education undergirds his social position even as he grounds his self-representation in notions of an idealized Fanti past, suggests a cultural nationalist discourse in which (1) whiteness is deployed not to pass or to assume a different racial identification but instead to authorize the revaluing of African racial identification—to allow African identification to be assumed differently: proudly and with dignity and (2) Fanti culture is positioned to stand-in for national culture rather than positioning national culture as an expression of the multiplicity of local cultures, for example, an expression of both Fanti and Ashanti cultures.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the discursive, affiliative, and performative meanings of whiteness in relation to emergent postcolonial identification and to insist that an interrogation of whiteness—which traverses cultural, symbolic, economic, and

[13] For a recent example, see Toni Morrison's short story "Sweetness." Morrison writes a monologue of a character speaking to the reader, "I'm light-skinned, with good hair . . . . You should've seen my grandmother; she passed for white, married a white man, and never said another word to any of her children . . . . Some of you probably think it's a bad thing to group ourselves according to skin color—the lighter the better—in social clubs, neighborhoods, churches, sororities, even colored schools. But how else can we hold onto a little dignity?"

psychological spheres—is a necessary part of the process of decolonization. This interrogation is necessary because, as I shall argue in chapter 2, the weight of whiteness—its authority, its seductiveness, its availability in establishing subject positions, its role in what Mbembe calls "the burden of the metaphysics of difference"—is still with us ("African Modes of Self-Writing" 240). Whiteness continues to serve as a key strategy in representing the African self, particularly representations of elite and aspiring elite subjects. In this way, whiteness is a key strategy in representing liberatory claims, where liberation is conceived as the attainment of key markers of modernity. As such, representations of a liberated African self are invested in notions of progress, defined as the ability to fulfill a meaningful destiny. Given modernity's founding myth of African difference, this destiny is a priori and a posteriori better than the key signifiers of the African: a degraded past of savagery, "slavery, colonization, and apartheid" (Mbembe "African Modes of Self-Writing" 242). The texts I examine, beginning with Sekyi's work, also suggest that the concept of liberation is invested in the notions of dignity; civilization; masculinity; and autonomy, defined as the ability to direct and provide options for one's present and future. As such, formulations of liberation significantly take up the key categories of modernity rather than challenging them. Given this conservative positioning of liberation, the subject positions allowed for through anticolonial struggles themselves become conservative, and whiteness plays a large role in this conservatism.

Through theater, Sekyi engages whiteness at a historically and culturally specific moment, exposing the representational strategies that inform self-making practices of early twentieth-century Gold Coast elites. The characters in "The Blinkards" represent various elites and the younger generation of aspiring elites who seek oppositional

identification through the power of whiteness. For these characters, whiteness serves as a trope that collates notions of success, morality, and dignity. Sekyi's use of whiteness as a representational strategy that undergirds self-making also emphasizes performance, fluidity, circulation, and accumulation, suggesting also the sense of whiteness as a watershed—not a geographic/political boundary as boundaries are constructed in nationalist discourse—but an ecological/psychosocial dynamic, a space where several different affiliations, aspirations, and contestations that constitute self-making collect—a psychosocially meaningful doing. In this way, whiteness can be figured as an important watershed site where key concepts related to inclusion, marginalization, authenticity, power, authority, control, voice, and status are consolidated within the context of normative Gold Coast colonial beliefs, values, and institutions. In other words, concepts of whiteness served to undergird coastal elites' self-making, aspirations for progress, and articulation of their resistance to the racial caste system that undergirded colonial modernity.

In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Frantz Fanon identifies a key psychoaffective inheritance of colonialism as the dissonance created by resistance. Sekyi's use of visual theatrics reveals that whiteness as a signifier of power resides uneasily with racialized Fanti identification. Sekyi's work predates Fanon's analysis of the ways in which questioning colonial values and roles from a subjective position of embeddedness within the colonial system creates complex psychic dissonances—the meaningful proliferation of psychic disturbance becomes a key marker of postcolonial identification. In this way, these dissonances symbolically magnify DuBois's conception of double consciousness to the point where the sense of doubleness does not adequately define the subjective

experience of the postcolonial subject. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois describes "double consciousness" as

> this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn't bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (45–6)

Here Du Bois points to the entanglement of American (national), Negro (racial), and African (geo-political) identities in visual terms as a kind of gaze that functions as an internalized standard. In chapter five of *Black Skin, White Masks,* "The Lived Experience of the Black Man," Fanon himself suggests that he "existed in triple," drawing attention to how the representation of the psychic experience of fragmentation in the black self proliferates from double to triple to the multiplicity of dissonances that mark the increasing complexity of identifications for the postcolonial African subject (89). These key postcolonial dissonances are created by needing to accept the positive valences of whiteness as the condition of the possibility of progress and dignity while having to reject the negative valences of whiteness as promoting notions of black inferiority and an uncivilized African past. The rejection is necessary in order to not constitute identification on self negation. Given this ambivalence of whiteness, Sekyi's work poses questions still relevant today: How can the black subject deploy whiteness, which

includes internalizing white supremacist values, to achieve success while also cultivating a self-concept grounded in a critical understanding of and respect for indigeneity, which in this case is signified by an authenticity grounded in owning and being proud of a Fanti past? What is at stake in grounding liberatory modes of consciousness—representations of the liberated African subject—in the trope of whiteness is gaining the ability to sit at the table of modernity and to partake in what it has to offer while also losing the ability to oppose the key categories that ground subjection in violence, hierarchy, and inequity.

An analytical focus on how whiteness undergirds representations of emergent nationalist subjectivity reveals the primacy of visuality in the performance of oppositional identification. More important, it reveals the system of conflations that traverse and construct emergent postcolonial subjectivity. This system comprises not simply the binary conflations of indigeneity with inferiority and whiteness with superiority but complex associations that at once relate the African past to dignity and morality and also backwardness and relate whiteness not only to progress, civility, modernity, and upward social mobility but also to racialized violence and exclusion. In other words, whiteness is a deeply fraught figure that collates both notions of success, modernity, and progress as well as images of a failure of style and notions of alienation and exclusion. The failure of style is marked primarily by the absurdity related to how the audience perceives the characters who bear the visual markers of whiteness in terms of dress, behavior, and speech. The characters marked most visually by whiteness are also perceived as ridiculous by the characters marked as authentically Fanti in terms of their dress, language, or reverent manner of thinking about Fanti culture. Finally, the failure of style is embodied in the moral arc of the play in which the character most absurdly

marked by visual whiteness suffer: Mrs. Borofosem is assaulted by her drunken servant, and her protégé, whom she is teaching to behave like a proper "white lady" and who has eschewed Fanti tradition to be engaged in the style she read about in an English novel, loses her baby (Sekyi 21). Mr. Borofosem, the male character most fraught by his intimate relation with the English language and increased comfort with the English style of dress, decides that native customs are better. For example, by the end of the play he decides that the native cloth is more comfortable than English-style dress if one is simply shown how to tie it properly and that sandals do not hurt the feet and thus represent a victory for "the rule of common sense" over the torture caused by the "regime of the boot" (Sekyi 161). This imagery shows a metonymic replacement of the colonial regime—and colonial modes of identification—with the image of the boot. The more authentic "native" expressions of identification relate cultural nationalism to rationality and respectability. This moral arc also creates an oppositional identification that is wholly backwards looking, pulling the way forward from as faithful a resurrection of the past as possible.

The anticolonial ethos of the play espouses cultural nationalism as an antidote to the cultural degeneration caused by colonial rule. This is primarily communicated in the play through the rhetoric throughout the play that opposes native culture to European culture, which is a source of alienation. As such, in Sekyi's literary representations of cultural nationalist identification, whiteness is a key structuring element of Gold Coast elites' and aspiring elites' experiences of alienation. The ultimate goal of decolonization is to foster liberatory consciousness or the existential lived experience of freedom. In *African Modernities*, African Studies scholars Jan-Georg Deutsch, Peter Probst, and

Heike Schmidt argue that examination of social practices and aesthetic representational strategies of African modernity show how "people seek to overcome . . . alienation . . . while using the very objects that embody that alienation" (12). Sekyi's characters suggest that he grounds his cultural nationalism in a critique of whiteness as an internalized structure—as a structure of identification and social binding. As such, Sekyi's cultural nationalism makes an intimate intervention into emergent practices of postcolonial identification.

Whiteness is leveraged in every subject position represented in the play—by characters who celebrate their English practices as well as those, such as Mr. Onyimdze, who eschew such cultural traffic. Take, for example, the self-anthologizing piece the young Mr. Okadu, a carpenter's son, sings at a garden party, which uses the performative power of song and the pleasure of rhyme to animate the tensions inherent in his self-representation. Mr. Okadu visits Mr. Onyimdze in Act One and asks him to teach him "some European things to make [him] like a white man" so he might win the hand of the young Miss Tsiba in marriage but her father will only let her marry a successful man "who has gone to England" (Sekyi 29). At the garden party, Mr. Okadu sings to himself:

> A product of the Low School, embroidered by the High,
> Upbrought and trained by similar products, here am I.
> I speak English to soften my harsher native tongue:
> It matters not if often I speak the Fanti wrong.
>
> I'm learning to be British and treat with due contempt
> The worship of the fetish, from which I am exempt. . . .
>
> I'm clad in coat and trousers, with boots upon my feet;
> And *tamfurafu*[14] and Hausas I seldom deign to greet:
>
> For I despise the native that wears the native dress---
> The badge that marks the bushman, who never will progress.

[14] "People who wear native dress," Sekyi, "The Blinkards" 45.

All native ways are silly, repulsive, unrefined.
All customs superstitious, that rule the savage mind.

I like Civilization, and I'd be glad to see
All people that are pagan eschew idolatry.

I reckon high the power of governors and such;
But our own Kings and Chiefs,---why, *they* do not matter much.

And so you see how loyal a Britisher I've grown---
How very proud and zealous a subject of the Crown.

I wish I'd go to England, where, I've been often told,
No filth and nothing nasty you ever may behold:
And there I'll try my hardest to learn the English life.
And I shall try to marry a real English wife.
(Sekyi, "The Blinkards" 45)

In the song, Mr. Okadu suggests that his subjectivity is constituted through oppositional low (native) and high (English) elements. The hierarchical logic of whiteness is the key aesthetic strategy that operates in the song, which presents whiteness is a key signifier that collates Mr. Okadu's aspirations for progress, refinement, and civility. This figural logic of whiteness serves to undergird hierarchical modes of self-identification and self-making. In Mr. Okadu's romance with Miss Tsiba, English education becomes the way he will fashion himself into an appropriate suitor for her.

Even as Mr. Okadu asks for English education as a bid to bolster his position with Mr. Tsiba, Miss Tsiba's father, he also shows the tensions that exist in his social positioning as well as the experiences of economic marginalization that inform his experience, as well as the broader situation of coastal elites in the play's historical moment. Before asking Mr. Onyimdze to teach him to be English, Mr. Okadu explains he was just fired because he called his boss "white savage" after the boss kicked him (Sekyi 26). In this context, "white" also has a negative valence and has the task of signifying

both civility and the savagery of the racial caste system, specifically the violence through which it is enacted as a daily social and economic practice, as well as the way in which it informs affiliations and sanctions relations with others (who is acceptable and civilized and who is not and therefore should be ignored). In this way, Sekyi deploys whiteness as a practice that tries to close the gaps created by colonial exclusion.

The main currency that allows the characters to belong or make a bid for social status is whiteness—the conflation of English, British, and European practices to stand in for key notions of African modernity: respectability, morality, progress, and civilization. Mr. Onyimdze confesses that, despite his affinity for Fanti culture, sometime he finds "it easier to speak English" (Sekyi, "The Blinkards" 35). He notes, " I suppose that is to be expected of us social hybrids, born into one race, and brought up to live like members of another race" (Sekyi, "The Blinkards" 35). Even if Mr. Onyimdze did not find himself intimately interpolated by the English language on a personal level, slipping "into it unawares," his social standing in the eyes of the elite and aspiring elite characters, such as Mr. Okadu, is heightened because he has traveled and been educated in Europe. As a character, Mr. Onyimdze opens up a key question about the aim of Sekyi's cultural nationalism, which in some sense aimed to consolidate a pure national (Fanti) space: Even if this goal were possible and desirable—if the transnational flows of capital and culture could be molded into pure spaces—how can a *social hybrid* go about constructing such a *pure space*? As a key representational strategy used in Anglophone literary traditions, whiteness poses an urgent question about the boundaries that working within a discourse of Western/white superiority puts on forms of self-making.

Sekyi's deployment of whiteness relies heavily on tropes of sight, beginning with the title itself. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term *blinkard* is an insult that literally refers to someone with the nervous tic of blinking all the time, suggesting that blinking acts as a physical barrier to seeing clearly. Figuratively, the term refers to someone who "lacks intellectual perception" or is willfully dismissive of the facts of a situation (*OED*). Playing with all the associations this word puts into play—visuality and subjectivity, representation and nostalgia, reflection and revelation, and image and perception—Sekyi frames internalized identification with whiteness as a form of false consciousness or not being able to see clearly in the more profound sense of wisdom and the epistemology of meaning and self-making. The play begins with a line from eighteenth-century Romantic Scottish poet Robert Burns's poem "To a Louse: Upon Seeing One on a Lady's Bonnet at Church," which satirizes social pretensions—"O, wad pow'r the giftiegi'e us/To see oursels as others see us!"—beginning the play with the theme of obliviousness to the perceptions of others and also suggesting that authenticity can be achieved through acuity and critical vision[15] (Sekyi 2). Sekyi's invocation of tropes of vision invites investigation of the social practices of self-making, vision, imagination, wisdom, and meaning making. As a representational strategy, Sekyi's use of tropes of sight suggests the visual economy of whiteness, which makes color as a

[15] The last stanza of the poem begins with the quoted line:
O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
An' foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
An' ev'n devotion!

The stanza suggests that sight would allow us to prevent blunders and pretensions (airs) in "dress and gait," suggest the visual and performative aspects of self-making. (*Burns Country*, http://www.robertburns.org/works/97.shtml. Accessed February 5, 2015.)

signifier of race a key aspect of experiences of modernity and, in particular, the sense of enfranchisement and citizenship.

The metaphor of vision also frames much of the liberatory rhetoric of whiteness studies. For example, in *Whiteness: Feminist Philosophical Reflections,* editors Chris Cuomo and Kim Hall (1999) write, "Scholars and activist critically interrogating whiteness seek to decenter rather than recenter whiteness by making performances of whiteness visible" (3). Whiteness serves as a key representation strategy of another text from this period. In his analysis of a collective biography of Gold Coast elite by Gold Coast businessman Charles Francis Hutchinson published in 1920, *The Pen-Pictures of Modern Africans and African Celebrities,* Doortmont describes how whiteness undergirds the representational strategies and cosmopolitan approach of Gold Coast elites. He writes,

> A further thread that runs through the text is Hutchinson's obsession with the "whiteness" of his subjects. Why—as a West African—he focuses on this element is not clear, but he obviously sees it as an outward and inward mark of modernity and civilization. What is peculiar is that Hutchison adopted a terminology and social classification based on color and descent that belonged to the slave societies of the United States and the Caribbean. His mindset on this topic probably had an American origin. Especially in the United Sates the debate about "whiteness" was current among urban intellectual African Americans at the time. Hutchinson's opinions about whiteness are in effect an elaboration of his views on Western civilization as an engine of modernizing developments, and again, it is likely that he voiced opinions specifically held by the urban elite of the Gold Coast. (486)

Moreover, Doortmont notes that in this book, Hutchinson, who was of the generation before Sekyi and was being educated in England when Sekyi was born in 1892, wrote with "a nationalist stance, moving away from the missionary and Eurocentric character of earlier books" (490). A central question Doortmont asks in his essay is "Why does Hutchinson . . . exert himself to praise the importance of Western (British) education and

civilization for the intellectual and moral furtherance of the Gold Coast—and why is whiteness such an issue?" (492). Sekyi offered his audience a comic and complex view of this obsession with whiteness harbored by the educated nationalist elite who were at once fighting the racism and political and economic exclusion of the colonial state and negotiating the role of traditional leaders in both the colonial state and emergent nationalist movement through his figure of the absurd creature interpolated by modernity *as* whiteness and also having a nostalgia for traditional culture. As scholar Richard Rathbone points out, this negotiation is not between the opposing categories of tradition and modernity but between the category of tradition as it is reinvented to serve the ideological and practical needs of the moment, in this case, the project of anticolonial consciousness in the form of emergent national consciousness[16].

Don't Be a Bushman: Whiteness and Cape Coast Modernity

We have too rapidly leapt over some of the difficult work of decolonization
and the articulation of anti-imperialist discourses
--Carole Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (65)

"The Blinkards" was performed in Cape Coast in 1916 by officers and members of the club, the Cosmopolitan Society (Baku 372). Sources suggest the play was received well.[17] However, given the play's critical satirical nature, Sekyi did face extreme problems in performing the play in public. Awo Mana Asiedu writes about the

[16] "The contingent history of colonialism shows that many West African colonial regimes could and did, in one fashion or another, restore or reinvent chieftaincy to play a subaltern role in the evolving colonial states. . . . some of the most significant arenas of African politics were to be dominated by sometimes violent contests between chieftaincy and radical nationalism. These were not contests between tradition and modernity but between different recensions of modernity," (Rathbone, "West Africa: Modernity and Modernization," *African Modernities: Entangled Meanings in Current Debate*, Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002, 27).

[17] See J. A. Langley, "Introduction," *The Blinkards: A Comedy and The Anglo-Fanti—A Short Story*. Langley writes, "As its central ideas on the dangers of Europeanism reflect some of the key ideas of the Cape Coast nationalists who also dominated the press and the literary clubs, one may conclude that the play was well received (xxii-xxiii). See James Gibbs, "Seeking the Founding Father: The Story of Kobina

> Gold Coast newspaper, *The Nation*, reporting that "Before the production, certain wild rumours had been circulated by some person or persons to the effect that the play was of an impious nature." Although the writer goes on to debunk this rumour, concluding that "the lessons it taught were wholesome and they brought some valuable home-thrusts to those who overstep the boundary of propriety in engrafting foreign customs on their own," it is immediately clear that the production of the play was not welcomed by everyone. This is not at all surprising, as the play lampoons the elite of his day, and many influential people may have felt its barbs keenly. That some characters and incidents in the play still resonate with Ghanaian audiences nearly a hundred years after this first production points to Sekyi's brilliant observation and understanding of the psychology of the colonized. (40)

Opposition from local elites meant that Sekyi had to move the performance of the play at the last minute to a school classroom. The play was performed on October 14, 1916, at the "Government School, Elmina Road, Cape Coast" (Baku 372). Given that the classroom was not an ideal performance space, problems and set change delays occurred so much so that the ending of the play had to be scheduled for another day: October 21, 1916. All the parts were played by males, increasing the sense of the ridiculousness of the female characters.

In the historical moment of the play's context, a cultural nationalist movement is fostering the development of emergent anticolonial national identification as a form of resistance. Set temporally in a colonial moment, the play's historical context is the strengthening economy of the colonial government, the consolidation of the colonial state, and the displacement of Gold Coast merchants by European businessmen who are "favored by the colonial authorities, and usually had more capital at their disposal, better

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Sekyi's *The Blinkards*" in *African Theatre: Histories 1850-1950*, ed. Yvette Hutchinson. Woodbridge: James Currey, 2010. 23–37. Gibbs notes that the premier production was well-received by the local press and provides background information on the first production based on articles from Gold Coast newspapers. Gibbs further notes that since the text of the play was re-discovered in 1974, it has continued to be performed.

access to overseas markets, and better European contacts" (Doortmont 483). Whiteness serves as an archive, bringing together key aspirations through which the coastal elites represented in the play articulated anticolonial practices and identities. This context suggests the dark side that informed local public and private social sites represented in the play, such as the garden party at Victoria Park or Mr. and Mrs. Borofosem's library. Doortmont argues that this mercantile elite class is invested in "a wish for 'modern living,'" which is evidenced through conspicuous consumption, travel abroad, and investment in large private homes (481). Sekyi sets the first scene in the library of Mr. and Mrs. Borofosem's private home, emphasizing this investment. The scene begins with the servant, Nyamekye, cleaning Mr. and Mrs. Borofosem's drawing room. Scene one begins with the butler, Nyamekye, talking to himself in Fanti. Nyamekye, who is described as a Fanti among Fantis, is introduced dressed in British-inspired servant's clothing. Nyamekye notices cigar ashes on the rug, though he sweeps it daily, and in the first scene, the audience finds him sweeping the ashes up once again. Next, the mistress of the house, Mrs. Borofosem, who is also Fanti, enters, dressed in a European-style dressing gown with a lorgnette, a pair of eye glasses meant to be held up to the face by its handle, but hers hang decidedly from her nose. Mrs. Borofosem throws the cigar ashes back onto the rug after yelling at her servant in Fanti, calling him a bushman for not leaving the ashes in the rug. Then Mrs. Borofosem begins singing in a falsetto voice the first English line of the play: "Snowdrops, lift your bell-like petals" (Sekyi 21). The falseness of the voice works with the incongruity of the image of a snow drop on the Gold Coast to assert Sekyi's key point of the self-negating quality of adopting cultural practices that do not organically develop from the specificity of the environment.

The performance of the English words in falsetto, the ill-fitting image of a snowdrop in the context of the Gold Coast in West Africa, and Mrs. Borofosem's wearing the lorgnette incorrectly, mix with the hierarchy of social class areas to create an association of the performance of elite Fanti identification with whiteness as a conflicted signifier of modernity and civilization but also of loss. Through the physicality of the voicing in falsetto and the visuality of Mrs. Borofosem's holding the lorgnette and Nyamekye wearing European clothing, Sekyi frames this performance as false—suggesting multiple senses of falseness, such as forcedness, deceit, inauthenticity, and loss—by contrasting these to what is constructed as the natural authenticity of the sound of Fanti. In the scene, Mrs. Borofosem says to her servant in Fanti,

> Look here, you idiot, what are you up to? . . . You are too much of a bushman. And what have you swept up those ashes for? How often do you want me to tell you that cigar-ashes are good for carpets? Do you not know that, in England, cigar-ashes are used to kill the moths in the carpets?" (Sekyi 21).

Mrs. Borofosem's statements to herself suggest how this issue of cultural loss and loss of an authentic self is related to the conception of a backwards past, which is related to how whiteness as a representational frame constructs difference hierarchically. Mrs. Borofosem muses to herself:

> When I reflect that our forefathers had only *ntwima* to scour their floors with, and had no pretty washes for their walls, I feel glad that I was not born in their days, when they lived their lives in darkness. I am particularly glad to have been born in the period when Religion had brought us refinement (...) Consider this chair, for instance. You sink into it when you sit in it, it is so pleasantly soft. It is not like the native stool, which gives you a pain in the loins when you sit on it. . . . What I cannot understand is that, in spite of all which makes our lives so enjoyable, our ancestors, whose lives seem so hard to us, lived longer and were happier than we can live or be. (Sekyi 21)

Here, Mrs. Borofosem articulates the key dilemma of trying to regain loss through performances of whiteness which continuously reasserts African backwardness. For coastal elites, who are positioned simultaneously as local insiders and the cosmopolitan administrators of the colonial state, whiteness is experienced as both a mode of belonging and dislocation as protonationalist identities emerge on the Gold Coast, pointing to the key crisis of identification the play illuminates. Literary scholar Simon Gikandi relates the sense of loss engendered by the insider and outsider positioning whiteness substantiates to colonial modernity itself. He argues that "colonial modernity dislocated African subjects by propagating its tenets as a universal model, while at the same time denying Africans, on political and social grounds, the possibility of its realization," (Probst, Deutsch, Schmidt 13). The colonial context of black exclusion and the appropriation of land undergirds this impossibility; therefore, modes of African modernity undergirded by the logic of whiteness become ambivalent gestures, which leads to Gikandi's claim that the trinity of the modernist project is black inferiority, rationality, and morality (Gikandi, "Reason, Modernity, and the African Crisis" 137). According to Gikandi, "matters of disputation at the beginning of the modern era were being driven by a set of assumptions about the nature of the African that are still very much with us"—connecting what Habermas calls "the complex and incomplete project of modernity" to the issue of decolonization ("Reason" 138, 141). These assumptions drive the majority of the characters in the play. Gikandi suggests that a basic problem of modernity "is the opposition it generates—modernity couldn't establish its normativity without the other—be it the figure of the woman, the Jew, the native American, or the black" ("Reason" 141, 143). Given this basic conundrum of modernity, Sekyi's staged

misalignments suggest that the use of whiteness as a self-constituting representational strategy is what marked "the impossibility of [coastal elites'] incorporation as anything but 'pariahs' (Plaatje n.d.:17) into colonial society" even as coastal elites' deployment of whiteness served as the very proof of their modernity (Comeroff 128). Here, whiteness is a vexed field suggesting that modern coastal elite subjectivity is defined through experiences of liberty, dignity, and market power as intersecting political, social, and economic constituents but also the racialization of Fanti ethnicity, which is marked by ignorance and backwardness from Mrs. Borofosem's point of view but by moral authenticity from a nostalgic cultural nationalist framing even as European practices are felt to be more "comfortable." The first scene reinforces Mrs. Borofosem's sense of loss and her unconscious alienation, with Nyamekye being her psychological foil and an authentic cultural nationalist subject.

By beginning with the interaction of these two characters, the first scene opens onto an imagescape that combines key figures of authenticity, mimicry, mistranslation, imposition, and desire. The staged mixture of borrowed and indigenous customs introduces the main conflict the play explores: African postcolonial subject formation—in this case, the emergent anti-colonial nationalist subject as the specific form the resisting subject will take. As such, the play takes up the issues of coloniality and decolonization, race and subject formation, the colonial experience, and the implications of cultural exchange in the context of the uneven power relations imposed by colonialism. The author's choice to begin the play in Fanti is telling of his position on such cultural borrowing, that it is more akin to cultural imposition when the flow of exchange is unidirectional and both cultures are not perceived as being equally valuable.

This inequality, or insistence on hierarchical conceptions of difference, ground the logic of whiteness.

Sekyi's representation of the identification practices of the coastal elite and aspiring elite suggests the dynamic epistemological, ideological, and political commitments and complex affiliations that bore emergent national identification. In this way, it is useful to think of the figural logic of whiteness as both an enabling and limiting factor for the emergence of practices of postcolonial identification. In his book on nationalism in West Africa, historian J. Ayodele Langley writes

> West Africa was, with the exception of South Africa, the only region in colonial Africa where a nationalist intelligentsia of lawyers, merchants, journalists, doctors, and clergymen sought to share political power with the colonial ruler and took it upon itself the duty of disseminating political ideas and values (Osei-Nyame 137)

Early political affiliation between Gold Coast elite and the British culminated in the Bond of 1844, in which a number of Fanti chiefs signed an agreement of protection against the Ashanti with the British (Yirenkyi and Amponsah 3). In their essay on the role of Kobina Sekyi in the founding of the national theatre in Ghana, scholars Samuel Yirenkyi and Ernest Amponsah write that by virtue of complex "educational and commercial activities . . . Fantes . . . especially those in the Cape Coast" became "the most anglicized Africans. . . . It was against this background of contradictions and searches for identity that the Anglo-Fante, who had earlier accepted British indoctrination, turned an instant violent political-cultural nationalist" (4). In his work on representations of Gold Coast elite society, Michel Doortmont describes the founding of the Gold Coast colony in 1874; the firm establishment of the colonial state by the 1880s, fueled by colonial capitalism; and the first organized protests against colonial policies in the 1890s, which give rise to the

nascent nationalist movement in the establishment of the Gold Coast Aborigines Rights and Protection Society, which remained the dominant organization of the nationalist movement from the end of the nineteenth century until about 1922 (Doortmont 483). Doortmont writes, "By "the early 1920s British West Africa saw a flurry of colonial activity, in which the formation of the colonial state . . . . was brought to a higher plan," increasing the marginalization of indigenous elites of the Gold Coast (493). Doortmont situates the Gold Coast elite historically in their mediating roles "between the African continental and the European Atlantic world" (476):

> In the second half of the nineteenth century, a significant part of coastal Gold Coast society was dominated by the urban elites of Cape Coast, Accra, Elmina, and some smaller towns. These urban elites were strongly anchored in a tradition of contact with Europe on the one hand, and with African social, economic, and political networks on the other. They were the middlemen of the Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century and of the export trade of agricultural produce in the nineteenth century. Their attitude was cosmopolitan in outlook, embracing European modernities, oversea travel, European education, and Christianity. At the same time, they were also integrated into local social spheres, traditions, and values, embracing African modernities. (476)

Historian J. Ayodele Langley argues that "West Africa was, with the exception of South Africa, the only region in colonial Africa where a nationalist intelligentsia of lawyers, merchants, journalists, doctors, and clergymen sought to share political power and with the colonial ruler took it upon itself the duty of disseminating political ideas and values" (qtd. in Osei-Nyame 137). In Sekyi's characters, whiteness underwrites the aspirations and performances that define coastal modernity through the way in which the characters constitute their social identities through their relationships to English education and practices of self-representation, such as when Mr. Onyimdze represents himself as a "social hybrid . . . born into one race, and brought up in another" (Sekyi,

"The Blinkards" 35). As such, a negotiation of whiteness structures the practices of early nationalist and anticolonial identification of the elite class. In the foreword to the 1974 Heinemann publication of *The Blinkards*, Sekyi's son, H.V. H. Sekyi describes the work the satire is doing:

> "The Blinkards" . . . satirises, thoughtfully but mercilessly, a kind of social epidemic which first appeared along with the missionaries in the lives of our forebears in the eighteen fifties, gathered strength through the rest of the nineteenth century, and raged in the opening decades of the twentieth. It began with the total rejection of African religious belief in favour of Christianity; it went on to the total confusion of Christianity with Christendom—of all that was good with all that was European; and the sequel, in our generation, has been to extend, or tend to extend, this confusion from the social sphere to the political sphere, and to accept no political identities not borrowed from the one or the other of the two parts into which Christendom finally divided, the Eastern or the Western side of the Iron Curtain. (xvii–xviii)

Sekyi is familiar with the desires and commitments that shape elite subjectivity as his paternal grandfather was a chief and his maternal grandfather was himself a member of an elite Fanti family, a "wealthy Gold Coast merchant," (Sekyi xiv) and a president of what author Samuel Rodhie calls "the protonationalist Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society," which advocated for the interests of elites, lawyers, and merchants in opposition to British colonial policies in the context of tightening British colonial rule for the interests of indigenous elites and merchants who had vested economic interests in colonial capitalism and political interests in the colonial state (389). Sekyi's experience and biography suggests that Gold Coast African modernity is related to the accumulation of trade wealth[18] and the emergence of a "protonationalist" movement that represents the

[18] See Doortmont, p. 481. "The 1920s . . . . can be seen as the end of an era which had started in the middle of the nineteenth century. Before that, in the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth century, the economy and social political structure of the coastal towns of the Gold Coast had been shaped by the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This era came to an end around 1820 and was followed by a period of

vested interests of professional and commercial elites; the pitfalls of such a classed movement are pointed to in Sekyi's work and later in Fanon's sentient critique of the national bourgeoisie.

The satire of the piece revolves around the audience casting a disapproving eye on characters, such as Mrs. Borofosem, who aspire to be proper, which is represented not just as European or specifically British but also as related to class and upper-class status. The play casts the way whiteness collates notions of class, race, culture, and refinement as a problem of identification that undergirds psychological colonization, putting the characters in the position of pursuing what constantly evades them as they devalue their own cultural traditions to pursue European practices. The interaction between the mistress and servant in the first scene demonstrates two extreme positions of this problematic: Mrs. Borofosem pursuing and imposing practices that are valued simply because they are understood to be followed in England and Nyamekye questioning the logic and sense of these practices. Nyamekye doesn't see the sense in leaving cigar ashes on the rug but doesn't have the ability to openly discard his employer's practice. The relationship of mistress and servant mimics the hierarchical social relations whiteness as a structuring element of Gold Coast modernity.

The beginning of the play presents the cultural nationalist take, which associates European practices with falseness and colonized consciousness, on performances of identification surfacing in elite culture. The master of the house, the Gold Coast merchant Mr. Borofosem is critical of cultural mimicry yet also deeply interpolated by whiteness.

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transition characterized by a shrinking European presence and economic malaise. This ended in the late 1830s, when the palm oil trade boomed under the influence of the accelerated growth of the industrial economies in Europe. The palm oil trade reached a high point in the 1850s."

Dressed in European style pajamas, Mr. Borofosem is the first character to address the audience in English:

> I heartily curse the day my wife decided England for a while. Ever since then, I have had nothing but we *must* do this, because it is done in England, we *must*n't do that, because it is not done by English people and so on *ad nauseam*. It serves us jolly well right for allowing ourselves to be dazzled by all this flimsy foreign frippery. The worst of it is that some of us got into these foreign ways through no fault of our own. We were born into a world of imitators, . . . and blind imitators, at that. . . . They see a thing done in England, or by somebody white; then they say we must do the same thing in Africa. (7)

While his critiques of how his wife strives after a thing simply because it is English emphasize the imitation and falseness of her actions, he himself feels shame about his discomfort with indigenous forms of dress. Mr. Borofosem and his wife represent the Gold Coast elite class: they have a large home and a servant, vacation abroad in Europe, sing English tunes, Mr. Borofosem is college educated in London, and both characters feel uncomfortable with indigenous cultural practices. As with Mr. Onyimdze, Mr. Borofosem identifies as a Fanti raised as an Englishman. He was immersed in the English language and English culture during his formative years, which Mr. Borofosem explains as he discusses his affinity to the much-talked about cigars:

> Fact is I like cigars. That's one of my weaknesses. You say cigars are European? Of course they are. But then, my parents set out deliberately to make me as much like a European as possible, before they sent me to England. They would have bleached my skin, if they could. . . . But I must confess to my shame, that I feel hampered when I put on the native dress. . . . Just fancy that I, a Fanti, should be able to express my thoughts better in English, because I evolved from youth-hood into manhood in England: Then, when I want now to speak my own language as much as possible, my wife compels me to speak to her always in English. (9)

Mr. Borofosem's feeling of shame about the identification practices that make him feel more or less comfortable as a Fanti man sets the stakes that Sekyi attempts to grapple

with. In “Africana Philosophy and Philosophy in Black,” Lewis Gordon argues that such an orientation of devaluation constitutes an epistemic practice that results in “epistemic dependency,” or “the colonization of the mind,” and more generally the colonization of, in this case, emerging practices of national identification (46).

Mr. Borofosem also links his wife’s performances of whiteness with an extreme disturbance in the visual field. In his first address, he says to the audience, “By the way, you know my wife don't you? You’ve seen her here. You simply couldn’t help seeing her, I’ll wager. She jumps to the eyes, as, I think the French say,” again highlighting Sekyi’s linking of representations of whiteness to visuality and tropes of sight as well as Mr. Borofosem’s criticism of whiteness which is itself articulated in the English language in the manner of the French (9). The overarching metaphor of sight the title “The Blinkards” puts into play suggests the aim of seeing whiteness in order to undermine it. By whiteness, I refer to the internal articulation of measurement that supports coastal elite subjects’ identification practices and sense of personal value and social worth as a synecdochic figure of how racialized imperial ideology and power serves as a model for Fanti nationalism—a figure in the coastal elite subject’s self-representation. This conception of whiteness as a self-constituting representational strategy has both external aspects—located in the structure of global colonial capitalism—and internal aspects related to constructing racialized identification through an internalized image of the colonizer. In a cultural framework, this internalization of whiteness is an issue of self-perception that inhibits the experience of liberation because it contributes to a subject forged through a sense of self-loathing and inferiority. As such, the play becomes an intervention to motivate self-correction. As a satire, the play exposes the foolishness of

characters that reject and devalue all things Fanti—including clothing, cuisine, and language—in favor of a religious reverence for all things white. Here "white" points to an amalgamation of English-British-European customs that the characters use as the font of all value and civility but also this underside the characters point to that suggests a sense of shame and loss of self—a rather absurd mix as it is ultimately forges normative performances of identification in self-negation.

The Mimic as the Desiring Subject: Representing Identification through Whiteness

An examination of the motivations of the characters in the play positions performances of identification as a way to create hierarchical divisions of class and cultural status. In the first scene, Mrs. Borofosem's first line is to call her servant a bushman. Later, in a discussion with her husband about his singing voice, she cautions him not to sing in Fanti as "It is only bushmen and fishermen and stupids and rascals who sing that song" (Sekyi 15). Mr. Borofosem accuses his wife of wanting to live a "showy" life (Sekyi 17). Whiteness functions significantly in structuring class belonging, which is performed through individual aspirations and in intimate relationships, such as marriage, an institution which traverses personal, intimate, and public spheres. Sekyi's representation undermines purely celebratory notions of whiteness in subject formation. Such notions see embracing whiteness as a kind of cosmopolitan choice in which subjects can choose from an eclectic mix of cultures and affiliations in practices of identification. Such arguments do not seem to take seriously two elements I associate with the trope of whiteness: power and hierarchical difference. The affiliative power of whiteness—the way it functions to cement relations of belonging—is grounded in larger market and state structures. As such, whiteness is ideologically maintained by the hierarchical economic

structures colonial capitalism comprises. In addition, state power and military might also undergird whiteness as an ideology and way of being. If whiteness were a product in a grocery store, it would be the one with bells and whistles, flashing bright lights and loud buzzers, seductive next to the other tired-looking products wrapped in brown paper bags. Meaning whiteness functions in a system where all choices are not equal and, as such, functions through its image of superiority and in this way is related to spectacle and also suggests a more profound sense of entanglement that is not captured by Sekyi's critique of conspicuous consumption. Tim Burke argues that a Marxian reading of commodification does not take into account "the complexity of the relations between things and people, nor the imaginative possibilities and unexpected consequences of commodification, or the intricate emotional and intellectual investments made by individuals with commodity culture" (Nuttall 7). As a kind of commodity, whiteness carries this deep and fraught entanglement with self-making practices.

Given its relation to social practices, ideological, imaginative, and economic structures, and subjectivities in modernity, whiteness is, in line with Debord's analysis, "complex and full of metaphysical subtleties" (15). Gold Coast elite's self-constitution through the consumption of whiteness as a key aspiration and model is an example of a key quality of subjects wrought in the context of African modernity "to participate on their own terms 'in the consumption of modern commodities and places from which they are excluded in everyday life'" (Probst, Deutsch, Schmidt 13). In this way, early anticolonial discourse is related to emergent consumer identification. As such, this metaphor of whiteness as a commodity is apposite in its ability to figure the way in which whiteness treats belonging and affiliation as a commodity relation in which the

"consumer becomes a consumer of illusion" (Debord 20). In this image, the consumption of whiteness is related to how it functions through spectacle in the visual field. In his discussion of representation and subjectivity in *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord foregrounds the relation of image and consumption in Western modernities and argues that "the commodity is this factually real illusion, and the spectacle is its general manifestation" (20). Debord defines spectacle as "an official language of generalized separation" and "a social relation among people, mediated by images" (2) and theorizes it as an "instrument of unification" (2). The concept of spectacle works within the multiple tropes of vision and visuality deployed in Sekyi's work. Debord relates spectacle to alienation grounded in the techniques of capitalist/colonial modernity. Debord writes,

> The spectacle, as a tendency to *make one see* the world by means of various specialized mediations (it can no longer be grasped directly), naturally finds vision to be the privileged human sense which the sense of touch was for other epochs. . . . The spectacle inherits all the *weaknesses* of the Western philosophical project which undertook to comprehend activity in terms of the categories of *seeing*; furthermore, it is based on the incessant spread of the precise technical rationality which grew out of this thought. The spectacle does not realize philosophy, it philosophizes reality. The concrete life of everyone has been degraded into a *speculative* universe. (6)

In Debord's Marxist analysis, separation is a key feature and function of spectacle, which Debord relates specifically to capitalism and class differentiation. I further suggest a key function of colonial modernity arising from its specular frame is specifically related to hierarchical conceptions of difference. The larger implication suggests s critique of Western Enlightenment-based modernities because, following Debord and Gikandi's critique, they are grounded in alienation, abstraction, and separation—all forms of loss. As a social practice, whiteness grounds material reality in modes of alienation, making, as Debord writes, "alienation . . . the essence and the support of the existing society" (3).

Based on the way that whiteness functions as spectacle and spectacle is related to both the economic[19] and ideological structure of social practices, decolonization must be grounded in the deep transformation of values, desire, and modes of self-representation. In addition to political decolonization grounded in spatial transformation through nationalism, cultural and personal decolonization is also necessary, which Sekyi's cultural nationalist discourse certainly understood theoretically, although whiteness undermined the radical nature of this move. By grounding oppositional identification in the figures of nation and rationality[20], Sekyi is deeply embedded in the key problematic of modernity rather than in a position to radically oppose the issues of inequality and alienation that constitute colonial modernity. As such, one issue the key themes of the play suggests is to the need to transform the ideological grounding of the visual field from blinding spectacle, or what Debord calls "the externality of the spectacle" to mirrors in which one sees humanness in the other in order to experience it in oneself, such an orientation suggests an individualism that binds one to the other—a form of radical entanglement—and as such positively values difference (12).

Throughout the play, the bourgeois characters engage in activities they have read about in novels or that others have told them is how things are done abroad to be sophisticated. As such, in line with Debord's analysis, "the tangible world is replaced by a selection of images" (15). By assigning value simultaneously and alternately to customs of English, British, and European origin, Sekyi conflates national, imperial, and continental collectives as the source of the characters' strivings toward a valuable,

[19] "The spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image." (Debord 12).

[20] See Mr. Borofosem's final speech in the fourth act: "Really, Onyimdze was right all along the line. If only we were national, we should be more rational and infinitely more respectable" (Sekyi 173).

liberated identification. This conflation suggests that the burgeoning national identification unconsciously moves beyond ethnic identification as its model. In this way, Sekyi brings to the fore the necessity of founding emerging postcolonial structures on broader affiliative structures and yet also presents the perils of practices of identification in the context of colonial whiteness, such as the problems of hierarchy, power, and negation that plague imperial subject positions in relation to the binary construction of difference in the opposition of whiteness to Africanness. More important, Sekyi presents the problem of founding identification on a position of constructed inferiority.

Sekyi's work complicates the negative figure of the mimic as presented in colonial discourse as well as celebratory readings of the mimic as a cosmopolitan[21] by suggesting the ways in which whiteness informs normative classed, commercialized, gendered identifications. Newell argues that the concept of cosmopolitanism is more nuanced than the colonial figure of the mimic suggests as it allows for a reading of the negotiation of global practices of identification within local networks. Newell critiques Bhabha's ambivalent figure of mimicry, arguing that the idea that the mimic is "'always the same but not quite,' as anglicized but not sufficiently English"—in other words, the conception of cosmopolitanism as a failure of style—is an imperial construction, insisting that Bhabha gets his reading of the mimic wrong because he "does not address the motives or perspectives of so-called mimics themselves" and, as such, does not emphasize that mimics are not "singularly oriented towards colonial culture" (107). In contrast to what Newell sees as the inherited negative bias of the mimic figure in colonial

[21]See Newell's reading of the mimic as a local cosmopolitan who escapes "imperial intelligibility" as well as intelligibility within cultural nationalist discourse, which she characterizes as anticosmopolitan in its commitment to proscribed notions of tradition. "Local Cosmopolitans in Colonial West Africa." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature.* 2011. 46:103-117.

literatures, she reads the figure positively as a local cosmopolitan who escapes "imperial intelligibility" as well as intelligibility within cultural nationalist discourse, which she argues espouses anticosmopolitanism in its commitment to proscribed formations of "tradition"—notions of tradition that emphasize purity rather than hybridity and espouse adopting unchanged practices from the past as a way to ensure authenticity. In "The Blinkards," while the characters are oriented to European and local cultures and speak European and local languages, aspirations to gain European manners to shore up practices of identification and bolster social status are exclusively oriented to local community members. Sekyi's work takes up the figure of the mimic from within the intimate spheres of home and spaces of leisure, as well as the public spheres of business and education—in other words, from within Newell's insisted perspective of mimics representations of and for themselves. All the cosmopolitan orientations Sekyi's characters exhibit are singularly related to aspirations for increased power and communal status. The audience of the first staging of the performance is also to insiders who themselves may be considered mimics. Although whiteness functions in the intimate spheres of home and subjectivity and the public spheres of local communities and institutions in Sekyi's work, it is still not celebratory.

The way whiteness undergirds the multiple, intimate, and global affiliations and orientations of coastal elites constitutes a fault line in their subjectivity that undermines purely celebratory readings of cosmopolitanism. According to celebratory readings of cosmopolitanism[22], subjects choose freely from a smorgasbord of equally respected

[22] See, for example, Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*; Werbner 1–30; and Taiye Selasi for her definition of the *Afropolitan*—"the newest generation of African emigrants" who have "come of age in the 21st century, redefining what it means to be African." "They belong to no single geography, but feel at home in many."

cultural values and an eclectic mix of equally valuable practices and affiliations in practices of identification. Newell emphasizes a celebratory cosmopolitanism in which "the so-called mimic constantly threatens to delegitimize the racial superiority that justifies colonial conquest" (107). Newell argues that cosmopolitanism, even as it is oriented toward the local community, is linked to subjectivity constituted through bids for expansive citizenship. Sekyi's work suggests that coastal elites' assertions of cosmopolitan style, which are grounded in performances of whiteness, do not dismantle racial hierarchies but rather the very opposite: that color and race are key aspects of citizenship. A cosmopolitanism grounded in performances of whiteness asserts citizenship and racial equality through the ideological and economic underpinnings of racialized disenfranchisement and white supremacy. As such, race stands out as a key way in which difference is figured in both African and European modernities.

Sekyi emphasizes how the cosmopolitanism of Gold Coast elites was founded in both performances of whiteness as a marker of modernity and resistance to whiteness as a marker of racialized inferiority. In their role as mediators between European and local commercial interests as well as in their roles as local agents of imperial rule, Gold Coast elites certainly had multiple, complex, and contradictory affiliations and aspirations. The coastal elite comprised "a wage-earning population whose identities were national and/or class-based, who spoke global languages and were to be totally immersed in global culture" (Rathbone 29). Celebratory readings of cosmopolitanism view this immersion as unequivocally positive. For example, for Newell, Mrs. Borofosem is a representation of a successful local cosmopolitan who exceeds the limits of colonial and cultural nationalist discourses that seek "to assert essential, bounded identities," but Mrs. Borofosem's

feelings of loss challenge simple notions of cosmopolitan success (106). Sekyi's representation of Mrs. Borofosem's absurdity is grounded in her ridiculous affectation of wearing British-styled clothing but wearing it incorrectly, her sound scolding of her servant for cleaning up cigar ashes because that is not what the English would do (although the audience is positioned very close to Nyamekye's point of view in seeing this as a ridiculous and dirty practice), and her use of the derogatory term "bushman" to leverage essentialist colonial representations of the backwards native to assert her modern, cosmopolitan practices of identification grounded in travel to England and supposed knowledge of English cultural practices, suggesting how elites worked *within* rather than dismantled racially inflected colonial categories to remake their identities through performances of whiteness.

Given Sekyi's personal connection to the old guard elite, the monstrosity of Sekyi's mimic characters, who comprise the nouveau riche coastal elite, may suggest a politics of exclusion that undergirds the play's representations. Newell argues that the anticolonial cultural nationalism of social elites represents mimicry negatively to keep "distinctive social classes (and also ethnic groups) out of the political spheres" (103). However, more important, Sekyi's mimic figures suggest that he grounds his cultural nationalism in a critique of whiteness as an internalized imperial gaze—as a structure of identification and social binding grounded in the scopophilic economy of colonial domination. Newell writes, "In this saturated scopophilic economy . . . sight is a vital ingredient in the assertion of colonial might" (107). Given the way whiteness functions in this scopophilic economy, I believe Bhabha's ambivalence remains in the way Sekyi's Gold Coast elite characters deploy whiteness. The Gold Coast elite's grounding their bid

to "delegitimize the racial superiority that justifies colonial conquest" in whiteness does not destabilize the economies, aspirations, and affiliations of the colonial system of racial superiority (Newell 107). Moreover, grounding emergent anticolonial/nationalist/postcolonial identification in performances of whiteness suggests a failure to transform the symbolic economies that undergird colonial practices of identification and an ambivalence in the essential relation of the emergent oppositional subject to itself. As theorist Nicole Fleetwood suggests in her study of race, visual discourse, and subjectivity, whiteness functions in an ideological system that positions blackness as disturbing. In this way, difference is figured as hierarchical opposition and, therefore, is problematic. As such, celebratory views of cosmopolitanism do not seem to seriously consider the system of visuality, colonization, and marginalization—ideological, institutional, and economic structures—that position whiteness not as one choice among many but *the* choice among options that are not only different but also *inferior*. Therefore, it is essential for decolonization discourses to consider that difference might be figured otherwise than hierarchically in order to disrupt the key problematic of modernity. Awo Mana Asiedu begins his essay "The Enduring Relevance of Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards* in Twenty-First-Century Ghana" with a quote from a letter by a thirteen-year-old girl that invokes the kind of I suggest here:

> They conclude that all things African are bad and all things European and American are good. I know that the world will be a better place if all of us respect one another's way of life, agreeing that no one is either superior or inferior, and that all of us are equal but our ways of seeing the world, worshipping God, rearing children or tending our crops may be different. 39

A self-conscious orientation to the complexities of entanglement may begin to allow for a challenge to hierarchical difference.

Whiteness—as a watershed figure and a colonial inheritance—frames and limits coastal elite practices of identification. The intersectional concepts collated in whiteness—such as progress, civilization, Christianity, and capitalism—that guide identification practices and European modernities more broadly define difference through opposition. In her work on representation and cultural politics, Trinh Minh-ha defines liberatory and oppositional modes of difference as "a tool of creativity—to question multiple forms of repression and dominance" rather than "as a tool of segregation—to exert power on the basis of racial and sexual essences. The apartheid-type of difference" (150). An analysis of Sekyi's work sheds light on the ways in which practices of identification are limited by hegemonic whiteness. Trinh defines hegemony as an internalized standard. She writes, "[F]rom direct colonization to indirect, subtly pervasive hegemony . . . . Hegemony is established to the extent that the world view of the rulers is also the world view of the ruled. I call attention to the routine structures of everyday thought, down to common sense itself" (148). In this essay, I have explored whiteness as the representational strategies, which are grounded in the ideology of white supremacy, the coastal elite use in constituting themselves. For Trinh, the ideology of supremacy is dismantled when "the master is made to recognize that his culture is neither homogenous nor monolithic, that he is just an other among others" (148).

Sekyi's literary work suggests the crisis of identification of the professional, urban coastal elite class, which is the primary cost of grounding practices of emergent postcolonial identification in whiteness. In the novella *The Anglo-Fanti- A Short Story*

(1918), Sekyi writes about the psychological development of a Fanti boy from boyhood to manhood. In "Part 1: Boyhood, Early Days," Sekyi writes:

> [B]ecause where the European mode of life is established wholly or partially, the social distinctions which separate class from class begin to appear. (From these must be distinguished the Native social institutions, which nevertheless do *not* separate class from class.)
>
> From this you will see that from the outset of the little boy's career he is made, directly or indirectly, at getting into the habit of looking down upon his unchristianized, or at any rate, uneuropeanized fellow-children; . . . . if not checked early in its growth or eradicated, later on, by reflection, will ultimately leave our little friend to live in the European manner in Africa or to marry a European wife when he grows up, in these and other ways expressing his inculcated dislike for things African and mania for things European. Again, the little boy grows up in a double environment: in his language, in his diet, in his garb, in his play, he includes elements of Europeanism. . . . the little boy, with infantile illogicality, argues from . . . above all, the greater consideration shown to those bearing the outward signs of Europeanism and Christianisation, to the superiority, in every respect, of everything European over everything. (179–180)

Whiteness operates in "the wider social context . . . [of] the close-knit Gold Coast community . . . [to define] political, social, and economic relationships of power, influence, and interdependence" (Doortmont 477). The role whiteness plays in Sekyi's representations of coastal elite society further suggests the concomitant ideological transformation necessary to birth a critically integrative approach to postcolonial subjectivity which must emerge from a context in which concepts of European supremacy are deeply entrenched. This entrenchment ultimately undermines the cosmopolitan approach of coastal elite characters by their own statements.

As a mode of liberatory consciousness, postcolonial subjectivity may need to examine ways in which difference can be figured differently other than as opposition even as it works to oppose colonial values and systems. To effectively challenge colonialism and the normative values its system of domination posits, a central question

of decolonization is also a central question that Fleetwood poses in her study: "How do we return to what we already know with curiosity and openness so that new forms of knowing and recognition emerge" (7)? In structuring opposition through hierarchical difference, whiteness undermines a tremendously important aspect of transformative decolonization: the decolonization of the self. Sekyi's representation of practices of emergent postcolonial identification suggests that the most cogent new forms of knowing to undermine the inheritances of colonization are related to how one knows oneself and, in forming the very human ties of affiliation and belonging that structure the social world, how one thinks about difference. Practices of identification is perhaps most trenchantly defined in this figuring and performance of difference. In this way, oppositional identification, which grounds decolonization, functions as a performative field in which, as Fleetwood defines it, figuring difference "is not a transparent act; it is itself a 'doing'" (7).

As a self-constituting trope, whiteness structures postcolonial subjectivity as a performative act of defining difference through hierarchical opposition. In Sekyi's work, the way the trope of whiteness shapes the representation of characters suggests an internal articulation of difference that figures in subject formation, and as a figure that conceptually grounds practices of racialized identification, is related to a range of historical processes, such as emergent national, ethnic, and colonial affiliations. Moreover, an examination of "The Blinkards" suggests how whiteness is intersectional, reflecting how race and class interact in the construction of postcolonial identification, and relates to the hierarchical logic of visibility and repetitions of metaphors of sight. In this way, whiteness operates, according to Fleetwood, in "a system of racial inequality

that is in part constituted through visual discourse," to point to the idea that "subjects are knowable through visual and performative codes" as well as the constitutive "role of visuality and performances'" in producing "black subjects in the public sphere" (3, 6). Given how whiteness structures postcolonial subjectivity through its distinctive definition of difference as a racial formation, critiquing whiteness presents a central question about how difference will work in oppositional modes of consciousness other than through hierarchical opposition.

Whiteness marks the cultural logic that structures the negotiation of practices of identification for the Fanti elite class. In "Local Cosmopolitans in Colonial West Africa," Stephanie Newell argues the racially-structured stereotype of the mimic, a dominant trope in colonial literatures, is a "culturally composite character" (107). In line with Newell's critique of the colonial figure of the mimic, Sekyi's work also presents a complex representation of coastal elite practices of identification even as whiteness functions critically in their self-construction. Perhaps the most powerful aspect of Sekyi is his ability to bring to bear characters who do not want to be seen as either mimics or as wholly acculturated Europeans—think of Mr. Borofosem saying defiantly to his wife "My voice is my own. I am not an ass" when she tells him she likes his song because "it is like white man's voice"—but who use whiteness to construct their self-identities ("The Blinkards" 15). An analysis of Mr. and Mrs. Borofosem and Nyamekye allows for an examination of representations of whiteness in relation to constructions of class, personal identification, and gender. Mr. and Mrs. Borofosem's performance in the first act begins to slowly reveal the tension in how whiteness structures oppositional identification. When Nyamekye asks Mrs. Borofosem if the cook should prepare a tart for dinner, she

responds, "Yes. I have told him that if he does not serve up European sweets with any dinner he prepares, I shall dismiss him. . . . Very funny. Formerly, if I had neither fried nor roast plantains after meals, I felt as if I had eaten nothing. *O, I forget myself*" (Sekyi 12, my emphasis). These lines suggest the loss of self that is a main dilemma that motivates Sekyi's cultural nationalist thought. Mr. Borofosem's address to the audience highlights this dynamic, which is not so much against adopting English or consuming European products but against a hierarchical positioning that almost constitutes a lack of choice. In speaking about the inequality of terms and hierarchy of social meanings Mr. Borofosem says, "It is that confounded *must* that annoys me. Why *must?* Dash it all!" (Sekyi 9). Mr. Borofosem's focus on this cursed *must*-ness suggests the oppression that exists in whiteness as an object of coastal elite desire, pointing to what scholar Richard Dyer refers to as "the dead end of whiteness" (xv). As such, Sekyi's play suggests the necessity of a re-evaluation of the practices and terms of cultural borrowing in the service of liberation praxis to foster the health of the African subject and to attain the larger goal of liberation, which is a motivating ethos of the 1916 moment of the play's performance.

As a representational strategy, whiteness is productive and creates space within a context of colonial domination (hooks 205). As such, Sekyi's use of whiteness marks a crucial choice that not only shapes his responses to existing cultural practices but also limits his representations of practices of emergent nationalist identification (hooks 203). The representation of Sekyi's characters—their simultaneous engagement in and resistance to whiteness—allows decolonization discourses to move past us and them dynamics. Literary scholar Simon Gikandi asserts the necessity of postcolonial discourse to move past binary constructions in his essay "Globalization and the Claims of

Postcoloniality," arguing that postcoloniality as a discourse must rethink its positioning as a radical critique of colonial modernity by attending more critically to the actual desires of real postcolonial subjects. Gikandi calls for the necessity of locating "this *other* desire"—the desire for an identity outside of colonialism but within "the very logic of Enlightenment" ("Globalization" 630). Gikandi focuses on the practices of subjection spatially organized by nation, while here I focus on whiteness as an ambivalent practice of subjection that both reflects and subverts oppositional desire defined as coastal elites' aspirations to construct selves grounded in the values of dignity, non-racialized access, comfort, luxury, and intimacy ("Globalization" 630). Sekyi's characters—with their absurdly constructed blend of European fashion, English phrasing, nostalgia for the great Fanti past, and London education—want to participate in a culture that is contemporary, stylish, and smart—a modern culture but one that is ultimately authorized by whiteness. Gikandi argues that "nationalist discourse . . . wanted the African to be both free and modern" ("African Literature" 394). However, the way that whiteness undergirds this desire undoes its most transformative objects: decolonization and liberation. Whiteness dwells within colonial modernity's fascination with progress, liberty, and sovereignty but does not rework colonial modernity's racial and class hierarchies and, more important, what Gikandi calls its economies of desire ("Globalization" 630). Given the key qualities of discursive whiteness—hierarchy, commodification, constitution of the African past through lack and incivility, and complex processes of self-othering in relation to an internalized Western norm—the next step for decolonization requires questioning its role in postcolonial subject formation and inventing critical practices to decolonize modes of belonging and the desires that constitute practices of identification, which, as Sekyi's

cultural nationalist discourse asserts, are key targets of colonial discourse. In the next chapter, I analyze the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o to position the literary and imaginative space as a place where the work of reflecting upon, challenging, and transforming modes of postcolonial identification can be done.

CHAPTER II
UNFINISHED WHITENESS: IDENTIFICATION AND PERFORMANCE IN DECOLONIZING LITERATURES

In all the suffering I have experienced, there is this infinite longing for complete humanness;
to have and be all the things that describe ideal human nature.
Siphiwo Mahala, *When a Man Cries* (9)

Urban Music
by Sekou Sundiata

I wanna tell you how much we wanted to make revolution
But in our yearning we learned, suffering ain't noble and to struggle is a blessing
that brings more life on the side of life itself

That wide are the rivers we know, deep is the water ,
hip-hop and beyond hip-hop and before
I mean I could run out of breath before I could divest the rest that I don't know

Maybe, I can break it down to you like this
We dreamed you Black, in your badness
Made you up out of poems, and lies and words to live by
And we ourselves was dreamed, most likely by some slaves
Whenever they got a little space to climb into their heads and be free
So when they closed their eyes, what did they see?
They saw you…they saw me...

As central literary trope and, perhaps, centrally defining human aspiration, liberation—freedom—is complex, incorporating the fundamental dramatic tensions and pleasures of an engaging quest: the righteous project, the evil oppressor, the setbacks, and fulfillment through the attainment of one's desire. But what can literature have to tell us about how one can actually achieve this state? How do writers represent liberatory consciousness? In the material world, the twentieth century saw the attainment of national liberation in the British African empire, from Egyptian independence in 1922 to the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1999, and the twenty-first century thus far has been rife with liberation struggles on the African continent, most notably in the aftermath of continued Arab-Spring-influenced uprisings in places such as Algeria and Morocco. In

the quotes in the epigraph, the authors represent freedom somewhat abstractly as attainment of humanity; human dignity; or the internal, aspirational space of self-reflection one can escape to within one's mind. In this chapter, I will examine two key novels of one of the great authors of contemporary African fiction, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o—his third novel, *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) and his most recent novel *Wizard of the Crow* (2006)— to interrogate how representations of race, and specifically whiteness, function in the body of his fiction. Is whiteness, as a figurative complex with economic an aporia that both enables and undermines the attainment of liberation not only on a national level but also on the existential level of personal transformation from oppressed to liberated? Ngũgĩ's literary figure of white-ache provides key insights into how whiteness and the entangled logics of domination and desire structure forms of postcolonial African subjectivity. Through white-ache, a fictional disease that embodies the desire to be white, Ngũgĩ reveals the competing emotional investments that structure practices of postcolonial identification and suggests what is at stake in the unfinished project of decolonization—take for example the postcolonial setting of *Wizard on the Crow* in which black man appear to be in power and yet are subject to exigencies and inequities of the global market economy—the redefinition of the black subject as one not defined through lack, through whiteness as the ultimate frame of reference—as well as the deeper implications of different conceptions of decolonization. As a mode of racialized thinking, whiteness as myth and symbol is structured through the hierarchical positioning of two binary modes—whiteness and blackness. This hierarchical positioning grounds the logic of domination, which is also undergirded by historical forms of oppression and exploitation, such as colonialism; imperialism; and postcolonial forms of economic,

political, and cultural hegemony. The concept of decolonization itself is shaped and reshaped by its contexts and can move in its framing from a recuperative to a critically transformative project. As a recuperative project, decolonization comprises the goals of re-appropriating land, establishing the territorial boundaries of a sovereign nation state, and re-valuing the worth of the black subject. Further, the figure of white-ache suggests that one defining experience of modernity is that of colonized/racialized subjectivity; underscoring the centrality of this discourse points to a central focus of twentieth- and twenty-first-century decolonization struggles—to reconstitute self-conception and revise the myths and symbols that are deeply ingrained in the construction and representation of one's self to oneself and to others, which I will call *practices of identification*. As a literary figure and imaginative device, white-ache, the desire of a black man to be white, then, may be a debilitating consequence of decolonization grounded in the spatial rhetoric of nation states and its recuperative politics and the visual rhetoric of blackness as an always already troubled and troubling position; both of these ubiquitous discourses ultimately work to reinscribe the structures of domination that constitute white privilege. As such, independence through the frame of nationalism may be necessary but is certainly not sufficient in achieving liberatory consciousness or in transforming the racializing effects of modernity. Through the figure of white-ache, Ngũgĩ makes a trenchant critique of how contemporary postcolonial African leadership is structured through the politics of whiteness. In contrast, a critically transformative project undermines and questions those structures, making a disease like white-ache incomprehensible, challenging the instabilities and inadequacies that still haunt modes of

postcolonial African subjectivity and providing the conditions for the possibility of a cure.

Deploying the figure of white-ache as a black pathology continues the foundational work of psychiatrist and anticolonial thinker Franz Fanon. While Fanon uses a more realistic approach in his explication of the pathologies of colonized peoples, Ngũgĩ grounds his deployment of black pathology in absurdist imagery, underscoring the power of satire to make critical interventions in our perception, enabling reformulations of the symbolic archives that undergird whiteness and the postcolonial African subjectivity.

Black or White

> But certainly for the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, fancy to reality, the appearance to the essences, . . . illusion only is *sacred*, truth *profane*, Nay, sacredness is held to be enhanced in proportion as truth decreases and illusion increases, so that the highest degree of illusion comes to be the highest degree of sacredness.
>
> --Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (xix)

> Tajirika sat on a raised chair, the one that Sikiokuu had made in imitation of the Ruler's cabinet meetings. He wore a T-shirt and shorts made of lion skin. He was draped in a cape of a colobus monkey skin that reached to his feet. Tajirika had discarded the glove used to cover his right hand. To the wonderment of his guests, his right arm and left leg were white, his left arm and right leg black. The riders assumed him a deity. Wonderful Tumbo said loudly, with absolute conviction: He is the chosen one, a man set apart by the gods
>
> --Ngũgĩ, *Wizard of the Crow* (752)

This absurd figure of entanglement and monstrous hybridity in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's latest novel, *Wizard of the Crow*, suggests the desperate lengths the businessman turned new ruler of the fictitious country Aburĩria, Emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus Whitehead, was willing to go through to embody his ideal model of subjectivity—a rich, white man. Thanks to a genetic engineering company in the United States, Ngũgĩ's character is able to graft white body parts onto his own black body. This

figure evokes the way in which whiteness stands in the novel as a sign of imperial power, as well as a desirable—in fact, *the most desirable*—model with which to forge identification. Where does this desirable model leave those without white skin? What does this figure suggest about the possibilities of achieving the ultimate goal of twentieth- and twenty-first-century struggles for national independence—liberation and liberatory consciousness? Here the poetics of whiteness come to stand in for the most devastating embodiment of desire, longing, and estrangement—the monstrous possibilities born of our contemporary moment in which the real possibilities of modifying our embodied selves lag only slightly behind our abilities to imagine. And yet this imagination seems to be only as possible as it is hobbled by the need to transform the possibilities of our bodies into images of whiteness.

Ngũgĩ's monstrous figure, with a mix of differently colored body parts, directly connects Tarjirika's image of self with forms of power. Tarjirika's change is incomplete because the corporation completing the operation goes bankrupt. One aspect of the image, Tarjirika's new name, Emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus Whitehead suggests the deep imbrications of Tarjirika's vision with imperial values. In addition, the prophetic register of the scene—the "wonderment" of the guests, the fact that the riders believe him to be a god set apart from men—replays the myth of whiteness that resides at the heart of historical accounts of the colonial encounter: the natives were amazed, in awe, and held the white invaders to be gods who arrived in the fulfillment of prophecy. The four riders themselves are also a parody of the four horseman of the apocalypse, contributing to the prophetic register of the image. This other-worldly dimension of whiteness imbues it with sacred power, not only as a self-image but, perhaps more important, as a form of others'

assessments—through the very decree and conviction of others. The view of others enhances the power of the self represented through this image. Whiteness comes to have both a profane (imperial) and a sacred (prophetic) power. This image works through accretion of inherited meanings and associations. In creating this image, Ngũgĩ brings together histories of contact and settlement, science, myth, and legend as the key ingredients of self-authorship. The critically transformative aspect of the image, that which helps it do decolonizing work, may be in its grounding in a key misrecognition of whiteness. This image, by trading on the narrative of the whiteman as a misrecognized god, enacts a complex amalgam of myth and legend to confuse easy classification between literary critic Northrop Frye's classic literary modes of the mythic, romantic, high mimetic, low mimetic and ironic modes, and therefore confuses the way in which identification with the character works (Frye 1957). In Frye's model, the mythic mode, the central character is a god. In the romantic mode the central character is superior both to others and to the environment. In the high mimetic mode the central character is superior to other men but not to his environment. In the low mimetic mode the central character is like the reader, a regular person. In the ironic mode, the central character is lesser than others, so the readers look down on or identify the absurdity of the character. This image of a misrecognized god seems to confuse all the categories that fuel the symbolic power of the literary image—not a god but taken as such, no better than the reader but presented as such, and while the reader may apprehend the absurdity of the image and, thus, of the character, perhaps the image's true power is in how it reveals a secret longing of the reader, an aspect of the unfinished project of decolonization, by revealing a desire that lies at the very heart of modes of postcolonial identification, the

ways in which we remake ourselves to resemble false images, false gods. The ironic element questioning, prodding, subverting—transforming—the mythic element, revealing the absurdity of such a god. And, more important, linking the structure of misrecognition, through an analysis or disavowal of the proclaimed monstrous god, to modes of postcolonial identification. If liberation, then, is revision, it is most certainly a revision not only of imperial mythology and values but also of the myths of supremacy at the center of images of whiteness. In this image, and more rigorously through the figure of white-ache, Ngũgĩ presents whiteness as an imaginary and a pathology. Whiteness becomes an imaginary that colonizes African desire and postcolonial identification. Through the figure of white-ache Ngũgĩ points out the salience of white supremacy in the African imaginary. The supremacy derives from the imbrication of religious and prophetic discourses with discourses of desire, longing, and self-authorship and the binary opposition of blackness and whiteness. Through this figure, Ngũgĩ ties together questions of power (embraced by the ruling elite) and identification (psychology that deeply effects how the governmental figures experience themselves, which is in effect represented as a form of self-hatred).

According to political philosopher Achille Mbembe, the great humanist traditions have focused on questions of freedom, liberation, and democracy. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a main thread of this conversation has been related to issues of emancipation and decolonization. Since the nineteenth century, such themes have proliferated in creative works by writers located in and writing about the continent of Africa. In his work *Ngũgĩ's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation* (1999), Professor of African Literature and Cultures James Ogude argues that "early African

narratives have always been seen as writing against colonial discursive practices in an attempt to validate Africa's historiography denied by colonialism" (1). In other words, African literatures participate in the decolonizing process of "returning to self" and, again, can be located within a larger humanist tradition in Anglophone literatures (Ogude 1). Further, Ogude argues that this "process of restoration was marked by a strong sense of cultural nationalism. . . . Significantly, the knowledges were reconstructed not simply from what colonialism was attempting to repress, but also from the historical conditions colonialism had created. The nationalist thought depended, in part, upon realities of the colonial powers and the discursive practices that came with it" (1). Ogude focuses on the way the nationalist discourses of the 1960s, which "involved a process of invention which was both contradictory and ambiguous" influenced Ngũgĩ's early novels (8). Ngũgĩ's third novel, *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), is not only written in the context contradictory nationalist discourses but also suggests how these contradictions are embedded within the very fabric of the nation. Specifically, the novel addresses how the desperate and violent events of the liberation struggle haunt and reside in the very core of the new nation. These events knit together the positive motives of liberation, emancipation, and reappropriation of the land with key personal, psychic, and communal tragedies that imbue the very nature of the nation with themes of betrayal. In the novel these betrayals are figured through the changing romantic couplings and the infidelities that are only possible because men leave the village to go to the bush and become guerilla fighters. Another form of betrayal represented in the novel is the situation of being able to be released from the subhuman conditions of Mau Mau detention camps only after swearing an oath to the Queen, which creates a deep sense of guilt caused by escaping

torture only by vowing one's allegiance to the colonial power causes. The key trauma the novel frames: the protagonist Mugo's betrayal of the location of beloved hero and freedom fighter, Kihika, which allows the colonial authorities to find and hang him. Every main relationship in the novel is marked by betrayal. Key characters in the novel are Mugo and Gikonyo. Mugo betrays Kihika to the colonial authorities and ultimately confesses his betrayal to the people at the Uhuru celebration in honor of the newly won Independence. Gikonyo is the foil to "Mugo's purity" and is both victim of "Mumbi's unfaithfulness" with Karanja, as well as being internally tortured by "his shame at being the first to confess the oath in Yala Camp" (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 107). Or perhaps the greatest post-Independence struggle fear that it was "the coward who lived to see his mother while the brave was left dead on the battlefield" (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 130). These indecencies that haunted the survival of the nation's new citizens, are perhaps most vividly portrayed by the characters Warui and his sons, who

> had been conscripted to fight for Britain in the Second World War. . . . Both had gone through the Emergency unscathed, escaping forests and concentration camps, by prostrating themselves and cowering before whichever side seemed stronger at a particular time and place. After the Emergency they returned to the Rift Valley to live as squatters on the land owned by the white people. Kamau, the elder of the two, believed in the power of the British. (*A Grain of Wheat* 148)

Surviving through submission is figured as shameful here. Even more than submission, the lack of integrity, the equivocation, is foregrounded by the sons' survival, which is made possible by their ability to grovel in the presence of white power and the ability to play for either side to keep their position. It is not shameful to survive at all costs, to do whatever is necessary to go on breathing, perhaps a ubiquitous attitude in the animal kingdom. It is perhaps in the nature of living things to do what it takes to survive what

Agamben points to as a characteristic shift in the political geography marked by the figure of the concentration camp, the state of exception, and the perpetual warfare that has marked the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Here, it is not the submission itself, as much as it is the submission coupled with the profound and internalized belief in white power. Through these characters, the themes of betrayal and shame undermine the purity of national independence, self-government, and liberation. Here, we begin to move slowly away from the awesome power of the whiteman as a symbol of imperialism, settler colonialism, and colonial modernity to the undermining sense the internalized belief in this power has on the colonized's psyche.

In one of the final paragraphs of the novel, Mumbi who has had a child with another man, says to her husband, Gikonyo, "People try to rub out things, but they cannot. Things are not so easy. What has passed between us is too much to be passed over in a sentence. We need to talk, to open our hearts to one another, examine them, and then together plan the future we want" (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 213). The novel ends with Gikonyo deciding to change the figure of the "wedding gift, a stool carved from Muiri wood" he will carve to "a woman big—big with child" (213). What has passed between Mumbi and Gikonyo presents a major psychological dimension of the emancipation struggle and emphasizes the betrayals that are embedded within the relationships through with the newly achieved independence is formed. Through this ending image, which is first enabled by Gikonyo's acceptance of the consequences of betrayal—Mumbi's child with Karanja—the figure of the mother full with child becomes the preeminent figure of the text in relation to the issue of decolonization and emancipation. This image suggests that, even after formal independence and the

establishment of the new nation, the finished project of decolonization is a new child still to be birthed—a completely forward-looking, future-oriented image of decolonization.

Though this image is the most prominent figure of decolonization in *A Grain of Wheat*, whiteness as an articulated figure in fact does not loom large in this early novel; although, the whiteman does. The novel asks the question of whether the successful Mau Mau liberation struggle will lead to real freedom. The whiteman is the oppressor, the main obstacle to the goal of African freedom, and a symbol of the power embodied in the new technologies of modernity. The colonial administrator, Mr. John Thompson, is the quintessential figure of the whiteman in the novel. He is an idealist who believes in the morality of British imperialism and wants to help Africans. As Independence Day approaches, Thompson's impending departure consolidates and sanitizes his mythology for the character Karanja. Ngũgĩ writes,

> John Thompson had always assumed the symbol of the whiteman's power, unmovable like a rock, a power that had built the bomb and transformed the country from wild bush and forests into modern cities, with tarmac highways, motor vehicles on two or four legs, railways, trains, aeroplanes and buildings whose towers scraped the sky—and all this in the space of sixty years. (*A Grain of Wheat* 136)

It is this consolidation, this conflation of man into myth that moves us from representations of the *whiteman* to representations of *whiteness*—moving us from the literal to the figurative and focusing the reader on the emotional rather than the logical valences and mythologies of power, mastery of nature through technology, substance, transformation, and progress (the main figures of colonial modernity) that cohere in the figure of the whiteman. Even as the novel focuses on the betrayals that constitute the ambivalent and internally inconsistent nature of independence and, specifically, of the

new nation, and engages heavily in the discourse of cultural nationalism[23], the novel does begin to gesture toward two larger ideas that the figure of white-ache brings to the discussion of decolonization: that self-hatred is the primary issue that must be faced and overcome in the unfinished project of decolonization, as well as the consciousness of mutual dependence. For example, Karanja, makes the comment, "Yes, yes, [we are] true Europeans but for the black skin," which begins to position, if only in the form of a joke, black skin as the only aspect that distances the African from the European (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 78). Later, in a more serious manner, Karanja tells a man who is trying to find out if Karanja has been intimate with the colonial administrator's wife, Margery Thompson, "You people. Why do you Europeans have anything special? They are like everybody else, you or me" (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 139).

In this early novel, the whiteman John Thompson, the District Officer, is a figure of absolute authority, "the symbol of the whiteman's government and supremacy" (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 183). In the climactic moment when Mugo betrays Kihika, Ngũgĩ continues to emphasize the *power of the image of the whiteman*. He writes,

> After walking a few steps from where he sat, Mugo saw a strange spectacle. . . . Kihika's face was there, pinned-framed to the shop, becoming larger and more distorted the longer he gazed at it. *The face, clear against a white surface,* awakened the same excitement and terror he once experienced, as a boy, the night he wanted to strangle his aunt.
>
> Mugo walked toward the District Officer, hazed with suppressed wonder and excitement. (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat,* 171, emphasis mine)

[23] In particular, the male characters engage in the language of cultural nationalism. For example, Wambuku confronts her love interest, Kihika, as she feels a distance growing between them as he gets more deeply involved in politics. She tells him he should be happy with his father's ten acres rather than fighting for land that never belonged to his tribe anyway. In response, Kihika tells her, "That is not the important thing. Kenya belongs to black people. Can't you see that Cain was wrong? I am my brother's keeper. In any case, whether the land was stolen from Gikuyu, Ubabi, or Nandi, it does not belong to the whiteman. And even if it did, shouldn't everybody have a share in the common shamba, our Kenya?" (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 85).

In doing so, Ngũgĩ focuses on the visual rhetoric of spectacle that whiteness as a figure invokes, and still we have the emotional coherences of terror and excitement, awe, power, and violence that African literatures so often invest in representations of whiteness. In addition, the relational aspects are clear in the rendering of Kihika's black face that stands out up and against the white surface. The visual rhetorics of foreground and background replay the key issue of relation, which grounds the representational work figures of whiteness do in foregrounding intimate and constitutive relation, moving from themes of opposition and authenticity in theories of subjectivity to issues of entanglement, distortion, and negation. The external gaze is foregrounded here. Mugo's looking at Kihika. The moment before he betrays Kihika's location to Thompson, Mugo contemplates the nature of power and decides it is the ability to "dispense pain and death to others without anyone asking questions"—holding the fate of a man's life in your hands (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 172). This definition of power comes up again and again at the end of the novel, as each of the main characters, all of which are men, move toward their moments of epiphany. At the post-independence Uhuru celebration, Karanja contemplates his own path to independence. After his romantic rival, Gikonyo, is taken to a detention camp, Karanja decides he will do anything to remain free so that he can be with the woman the two men are interested in, Mumbi. Ngũgĩ writes,

> When Gikonyo was taken to detention, Karanja suddenly knew he would never let himself be taken away from Mumbi. He sold the Party and Oath secrets, the price of remaining near Mumbi. Thereafter the wheel of things drove him into greater and greater reliance on the whiteman. That reliance gave him power—power to save, to imprison, to kill. (*A Grain of Wheat* 182)

Power, in the novel, is always configured as white power—proximity to and reliance on the whiteman. Ngũgĩ writes, "White power had given Karanja a fearful security" (*A Grain of Wheat* 183). This definition of power is grounded in the ideology of white supremacy that undergirds and justifies colonial expansion. Karanja becomes a home guard and thinks of the black freedom fighters he killed as "terrorists" who were "less like human beings and more like animals" (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 199). The power to kill without threat of punishment made Karanja "feel like a new man, a part of an invisible might whose symbol was the whiteman. Later, this consciousness of power, this ability to dispose of life by merely pulling a trigger, so obsessed him that it became a need" (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 199). This formulation of power and the ability to kill (with the additional ideological level of being able to be killed rendering one as less than human or certainly less civilized) rehearses Carl Schmitt's definition of the sovereign as "he who decides on the state of exception" (qtd. in Agamben 1). Agamben argues that the state of exception is positioned "at the limit between politics and the law" (1). "Indeed," Agamben argues,

> According to a widely held opinion, the state of exception constitutes a 'point of imbalance between public law and public fact' (Saint-Bonnet 2001, 28) that is situated—like civil war, insurrection and resistance—in an 'ambiguous, uncertain, borderline fringe, at the intersection of the legal and the political' (Fontana 1999, 16). (Agamben 1)

As such, Agamben defines the state of exception as an ambivalent marker that is "the result of periods of political crisis" (1). Its ambivalence comes from its dependence on a legal form—a law "that is the suspension of law itself"—but its conception in political ground (1). For Agamben, the state of exception is the ambivalent condition of possibility

for "the relation that binds and at the same time abandons the living being to law" (1). As such, Ngũgĩ forges his characters at the intersection of politics (transition to black governance), the law (colonial laws that deny and limit black citizenship and humanity, and crisis (postcolonial resistance/ Mau Mau anticolonial insurgency).

In Agamben's account, borders function prominently in performances of identification forged through the state of exception, which functions as a condition of their possibility and emergence. For Ngũgĩ's characters in *A Grain of Wheat,* ambivalence and simulacra are the most prominent features of performances of postcolonial identification. The term *postcolonial* is highly contested. Many critics charge that it is a naively celebratory concept that enacts a universalizing closure of history into clear-cut periods of before and after (independence). In "When Was 'the Post-Colonial'? Thinking at the Limit," Stuart Hall cites Ella Shohat's criticism that "it blurs the clear-cut distinctions between colonizers and colonized hitherto associated with the paradigms of 'colonialism,' 'neo-colonialism' and 'Third Worldism' which it aims to supplant" (242). In an attempt to answer such criticisms, such as those launched by theorists Anne McClintock and Arlif Dirlik, Hall states, "A certain nostalgia runs through some of these arguments for a return to a clear-cut politics of binary oppositions, where clear 'lines can be drawn in the sand' between goodies and baddies" (244). This nostalgia for simplicity suggests the profound temporal and spatial multiplicity the concept of the postcolonial references. By *postcolonial* here, I do not refer simply to a temporal historical time of after individual moments of independence; the novel itself spans the late colonial and the early postcolonial periods. Here, I refer to *postcolonial* as an operative concept in Hall's sense of "a time of 'difference'" that "has implications for the forms of politics and *for*

subject formation in this late-modern moment"? ("What Is 'the Post' in Post-colonial" 242, my emphasis). For Hall, these implications for subject formation are due to the "powerful unconscious investments" that mark the concept of the postcolonial as an ambivalent signifier of both desire and danger. Hall argues that "colonialism is defined in terms of binary division between" the colonized and the colonizer"—the others "whose termination ceaselessly, but without final supersession, the colonized marks themselves—the *difference* of postcolonialism is marked by its opposition to these existing boundaries (Hall 242). In this way, as with Agamben, Hall also emphasizes the function of borders in conceptions of subjectivity. For Hall, the concept of the postcolonial references an operative principle of conceptual space and marks a shift that implies a discursive identification structured through desire and the exigencies of capitalism that is "desperately trying to understand what making an ethical political choice and taking a political position in a necessarily open and contingent political field is like" (244). I would argue that the difference in the postcolonial is marked by a shift in consciousness—a shift to an oppositional consciousness or oppositional position in relation "to some mythicised Eurocentric conception of high civilization"—of what it means to be civilized, human, valuable (Hall 246). This mythologized conception is not intelligible without the conceptual framework of whiteness as a standard by which to judge worth, an imaginary, a desire.

On the level of the image, Ngũgĩ enshrouds Karanja's newfound subjecthood in the specter of whiteness when he describes what Karanja's wears as he executes his first job as a home guard for the colonial government: "The hood—white sack—covered all his body except his eyes. During the screening operations, people would pass in queques

in front of the hooded man. By a nod of the head, the hooded man picked out those involved in Mau Mau" (*A Grain of Wheat* 199). On the level of the image, Karanja's newly found self, his hooded self, is white. The fact that the eyes are not covered works on the level of symbol to suggest the importance of the clarity of vision—a clarity that, certainly, this hooded self does not yet possess. But the two main questions that animate *A Grain of Wheat*—What is freedom? and What is power?—allow the reader to begin to make such connections. The third primary theme of the novel addresses the personal and interpersonal betrayals that undergird independence and, therefore, haunt the newly independent postcolonial nation and, perhaps more important, the newly formed postcolonial subject.

For Mugo, freedom certainly comes from his painful confession at the Uhuru celebration. Ngũgĩ writes,

> As soon as the first words were out, Mugo felt light. A load of many years was lifted from his shoulders. He was free, sure, confident.
>
> Only for a minute.
>
> No sooner had he finished speaking than the silence around, the lightness within, and the sudden freedom pressed heavy on him. (*A Grain of Wheat* 204)

This ambivalent image suggests an anxiety about freedom—freedom here is configured as both loss and possibility, as in Hall's sense of desire and danger, but always the "start of a new life" (Ngũgĩ, *A Grain of Wheat* 204).

Some critics assert that, as an analytical frame, postcolonialism is a result of US academia's preoccupation with postmodernism and conceptually serves as a universalizing category that marks "the final closure of a historical epoch" both epistemologically and chronologically. The problem with postmodernism (and by

association the origin of the universalizing and ahistorical tendencies critics charge postcolonial analytical practices with), Frederic Jameson argues, is that "as a cultural moment [it] is fixated on the present so as to erase any grounding in the past, occluding history from our readings" (Harrow 57). A definition of decolonization grounded in such a conceptual frame posits black governance as the ultimate measure of liberation. However Frantz Fanon's seminal formulation in *The Wretched of the Earth* challenges simply celebratory formulations of decolonization. Fanon defines the concept of decolonization as "a complete calling in question of the colonial situation" that "influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally" (37, 36). Fanon's project of decolonization goes beyond spatial concerns about the construction of a black nation and into the conceptual terrain of subjectivity by embracing "decolonization [as] the veritable creation of a new man" (36). Following Fanon, postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha also defines decolonization in this deeper sense as "a plan of action as well as a projected aspiration" ("Forward" xvi, xvii). Here, the temporal aspect of decolonization is emphasized by defining it as a mode of desire—an aspiration for the future that informs identification, consciousness, and the experience of self and other—and as a future-oriented concept. The major theme of *A Grain of Wheat*—the displaced nature of liberation and the fraught nature of liberatory consciousness—reflects and reworks Fanon's conception of decolonization. While decolonization is often configured as a forward-looking project, Ngũgĩ's characters labor in a landscape that is not only not without a past but is instead fraught with, perhaps almost wholly overburdened, by the past. In *A Grain of Wheat*, it is this trauma, this suspension of the present in the

particularities of the past that mark Ngũgĩ's representation of postcolonial subjectivity (Hall 243).

As a form, literature is particularly good at providing access to the internal landscapes of characters. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngũgĩ presents characters that are fragmented, hurt, betrayed, wounded, questioning, and struggling. In this early novel, Ngũgĩ does not present characters that are simply celebratory about the anticolonial struggle or even about the prize of independence itself. In other words, independence is not a clearly demarcated liberatory or an unequivocally emancipatory experience that definitely ends colonialism and manifests freedom—Shohat's desired clear line in the sand (Hall 244). Rather, Ngũgĩ presents the struggles that traverse the internal and inter-relational landscapes of the characters, from the extreme personal, physical, emotional, and communal hardships an anticolonial struggle against British imperialism entails to the way the aftermath and consequences of that struggle color independence both as an event and as a structure. As an event, readers experience each character's fear and anxiety about attending the Uhuru independence celebration itself—having to publically admit to a betrayal, seeing a courted lover with another man's child, remembering traitorous oaths taken to escape torture, or being found out and punished as a collaborator with the colonial administration. Structurally, or conceptually, the grave betrayals narrated disallow a simply celebratory stance for the characters as each one grapples with both the atrocities committed by the colonial government and the guilt that arises from betrayals committed by Africans against other community members or against their ideals about liberation. The ageless question Does the end justify the means is flipped on its head—Do the consequences of the means allow for the desired ends? This is ultimately a

structural question about the conditions of possibility of liberation and liberatory consciousness. This problematic is exemplified in the last chapter of the novel when Gikonyo lies in the hospital and thinks about the events of the Uhuru celebration. Ngũgĩ writes:

> At every thought, he was pricked with guilt. Courage had failed him, he had confessed the oath in spite of vows to the contrary. What difference was there between him and Karanja or Mugo or those who had openly betrayed other people and worked with the whiteman to save themselves? Mugo had the courage to face his guilt and lose everything. Gikonyo shuddered at the thought of losing everything. (*A Grain of Wheat* 212)

The different betrayals featured in the novel—betraying an oath of allegiance to anticolonial struggle, or betraying a freedom fighter to the colonial government—perhaps coalesce around a fear of losing oneself—the ironic and dizzying position of losing oneself to gain freedom and independence—losing oneself to more fully manifest one's possibilities for the greater good of emancipation.

Through these characters, enjoined in a choice, struggling to define themselves and build intimate connections with community members, Ngũgĩ creates a narrative space where, as Hall explains as he addresses critiques of the postcolonial, "There is a 'politics'. . . ; but it is not one from which complexity and ambiguity can be usefully expunged. . . . but [is] characteristic of a certain kind of political event of our 'new times' in which both the crisis of the uncompleted struggle for 'decolonisation' and the crisis of the "post-independence' state are deeply inscribed" (244). In *A Grain of Wheat*, the whiteman marks an identificatory binary, a binary between black and white, in the novel and in the subject positions the characters narrate. Even as the figure of the whiteman creates a clear binary in the novel, the fraughtness, guilt, and ambiguity that defines the

emotional and physical space in which the characters act points not to the whiteman but to whiteness as an operative principle of the space in which they conceive of themselves, others, and the task of decolonization. Through the structure of whiteness, the characters' practices of identification, the experience of being a valuable subject, is, ultimately, deferred. What role does whiteness play in this displacement? Although not explicit, whiteness operates on the level of the image in *A Grain of Wheat* and becomes more fully developed in Ngũgĩ's most recent work of fiction, *Wizard of the Crow* (2006). The figure of the whiteman is a structuring element in *A Grain of Wheat* and the subjectivities narrated through the storytelling, and this figure is structured through the binary oppositions of black and white identification and their opposing ontological values. That structure of opposition is a precursor and precedent for oppositional consciousness as narrated in *Wizard of the Crow*, but oppositional consciousness is a more nuanced kind of relation rather than one of binary opposition.

Identification and Performance: The Unfinished Project of Decolonization

> It was a bad time to die, and our Freedom had chosen to do just that.
> --"Our Freedom," Lawrence Hoba, imagineer

> . . . in the case where the self is merely represented and ideally presented (vorgestellt), there it is not actual: where it is by proxy, it is not.
> --Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind* (362)

Thirty-nine years after *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Wizard of the Crow* appears in a context where decolonization is both taken for granted and yet not quite a fully embodied reality. A context in which, perhaps, the legacies of colonization are more complicated to identify and address than in the period of cultural nationalism and moments of early post-independence. Nonetheless, Ngũgĩ provides trenchant insights about the unfinished project of decolonization through the colonized thought patterns and desires that structure

the identities of members of the elite class in his most recent work of fiction, *Wizard of the Crow*. This novel provides a way to look and laugh at the ways in which whiteness structures elite postcolonial practices of identification and desire. *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) depicts "a case of white-ache with a cure that has gone wrong" (740). A pharmakon that leaves the suffering "like somebody who has lost her way and knows that she has lost her way but does not know how to find it again" (740). White-ache is one pole that animates the narrator's "global journey in search of the source of black power," which he ultimately finds "in the unity of blackness" (731). Rather than an external opponent or system, as with the figure of the whiteman in *A Grain of Wheat*, white-ache in *Wizard of the Crow* is tied with governmental cabinet member Tarjirika's desire to be a rich, white, Englishman. Through the figure of this imaginary illness, postcolonial identification becomes a sad and ultimately failed attempt to recapitulate rather than re-envision colonial practices of identification. The very structure of recapitulation is captured in the way that Tajirika begins the process of attaining whiteness through a leaflet he receives on a street corner in New York "for a clinic specializing in genetic engineering, cloning, transplants, and plastic surgery (*Crow* 741). Ngũgĩ writes, "The ad claimed that the company, Genetica Inc., grew all the body parts in its own laboratory and that its very highly trained staff could change anybody into any identity of their desire, quickly and efficiently, without any side effects" (*Crow* 741). Ngũgĩ presents white-ache as a figure that articulates the central nature of social understandings and experiences of race in anticolonial identification and suggests the effects of whiteness on postcolonial practices of identification and post-independence black governance. The

figure of white-ache allows for a generative critique of the complex ways that whiteness structures performances of postcolonial identification.

Whiteness: The Disagreeable Mirror

> I concluded long ago that they found the color of my skin inhibiting. This color seems to operate as a most disagreeable mirror, and a great deal of one's energy is expended in reassuring white Americans that they do not see what they see.
> --James Baldwin, "White Man's Guilt" (47)

Two years before *A Grain of Wheat* was published, *Ebony*, the premier globally circulating African-America-focused magazine, published its August 1965 edition titled "The White Problem in America. In his "Publisher's Statement," J. H. Johnson poses the question, What has held the Negro up from access to his full citizenship and humanity (27)? His answer,

> The unthinking white man—Mr. Charlie, Whitey, The Man—the unthinking white man who is the symbol to Negroes of all those whites "who have stood in the doorways to keep the Negro back." . . . For more than a decade through books, magazines, newspapers, TV and radio, the white man has been trying to solve the race problem through studying the Negro. We feel that the answer lies in a more thorough study of the man who created the problem. In this issue we, as Negroes, look at the white man today with the hope that the effort will tempt him to look at himself more thoroughly. With a better understanding of himself, we trust that he may then understand us better—and this nation's most vital problem can be solved. (27)

This symbolic level that Johnson invokes is the level that Ngũgĩ masterfully examines—and, more important, allows the reader to examine in *Wizard of the Crow*. In the radically different historical moment 41 years after this statement—a moment variously referred to as postcolonial, postracial, postapartheid—Ngũgĩ strikes a very different tone from the discourse in this statement or in the essay "White Man's Guilt" contained in the same issue, authored by James Baldwin. Although Africa and America are very different

geographical spaces with different and specific histories, I highlight these African-American texts because of their deliberate invocation of the figure of the white man as in Ngũgĩ's use of "whiteman" in *A Grain of Wheat*. Both the publisher's statement and Baldwin's essay are striking in their strident tones of responsibility—which is externally inflected with a focus on "they," "white Americans," "the white man"—as well as transformation. Baldwin wields the marvelously apt image of the white man as a "disagreeable mirror," which serves as the essay's main metaphor. In this essay that examines the "deeply rooted . . . securely lodged" guilt of the white man, Baldwin excoriates white Americans for the violence of their global historical record and calls on them to face this record so that they can change their position of being "impaled on their history like a butterfly stuck on a pin" (47). Baldwin writes,

> White man, hear me! History . . . does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally *present* in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, *our identities*, and our aspirations. And it is with great pain and terror that one begins to realize this. In great pain and terror one begins to assess the history which has placed one where one is and formed one's point of view. In great pain and terror because, therefore, one enters into battle with that historical creation, Oneself, and attempts to recreate oneself according to a principle more human and more liberating; one begins the attempt to achieve a level of personal maturity and freedom which robs history of its tyrannical power, and also changes history. (my emphasis, 47)

Ngũgĩ turns these reflective comments in on themselves, offering another kind of disagreeable mirror: one that asks the contemporary postcolonial black subject to apply these searing truths to its own performances of identification and its deepest desires.

While the whiteman as a figure throughout these texts invokes the material and institutional level—the realities of imperial power and the hierarchies of colonial rule—whiteness operates on the symbolic level as a mediation and a desire that distances the postcolonial black subject from itself. In particular, Ngũgĩ's presentation of this issue comes through the specific character of Tarjirika. As a black-skinned man trying desperately to become white, Tarjirika is stuck, like Baldwin's butterfly on a pin. However, Tarjirika's quest is more than skin deep. Here Ngũgĩ presents the whiteness that Tarjirika desires as both material and epistemological. In the novel whiteness operates as a set of beliefs that distance the postcolonial black subject from itself and, ultimately, from the liberation that was the driving motivation of anticolonial struggle. Color, whiteness, stands in for a complex mix of aspirations that Baldwin concisely renders as "a personal maturity and freedom," and Johnson renders as full citizenship and humanity.

Ngũgĩ adds to these aspirations, the complex ways in which global market capitalism influences the desires that motivate performances of postcolonial identification. In this way, Ngũgĩ foregrounds the fact that the transformation involved in liberation is structural, embodied, and psychological, on the level of desire. White-ache represents whiteness as a kind of narration sickness—a story that the characters tell themselves that further distances them from their ultimate aspiration of liberatory self-apprehension and self-consciousness. As such, the mode of postcolonial African identification that Ngũgĩ explores in the novel suffers from "narration sickness"[24]. What

[24] Radical educator Paulo Freire uses the concept of narration sickness in relation to the state of contemporary education. Freire contends that the sickness can be cured by changing the operating paradigm of education from a hierarchical banking metaphor, in which knowledge is deposited into empty students, to a problem-solving metaphor, where students and teachers collaborate to transform their world. (256).

is required is a new way for Tajirika and, by extension, black postcolonial identification, to narrate itself. Ngũgĩ locates a cure by casting narrative space as a "performative space, a contested political space [of] reflection and action" where the transformation of performances of African postcolonial identification can be imagined (Lovesey 140).

In *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngũgĩ presents two main threads that constitute postcolonial African identification—the exigencies of capitalism and whiteness—two imbricated structures that suggest the continued relevance of class as an axis of conflict, as well as the implicit nature of the market, as two forces that shape postcolonial identification. For Ngũgĩ, the market is one dimension of how we are embodied, how identities are communicable and communicated, and how they are disseminated. Ngũgĩ's analysis also adds a dimension to classical Marxist positions that privilege the economic sphere as the primary terrain of conflict. Ngũgĩ adds a psycho-social dimension that is equally important. In *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord's analysis of the effects of capitalism as the condition of modern production, Debord defines spectacle "not as a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images" (2). To this intrapersonal dimension, Ngũgĩ adds a transpersonal analysis, including the dimension within an individual. The continued relevance of Ngũgĩ's Marxism foregrounds how the hierarchical structure of the capitalist global market "reflects and determines the shape, texture, and boundaries" of identification (Iton 3). As a set of economic practices, the market influences the logic of social relations through which individual identification is constituted. Therefore, Marxist critical strategies become important to the theories of decolonized subjectivity and anticolonial consciousness suggested by Ngũgĩ's work. Ngũgĩ writes, "It was in his hotel in New York during his

first visit as the Minister of Finance that Tajirika had happened to read an issue of the *Billionaire*, a magazine about the richest men and corporations in the world; almost all the men white Americans, and almost all the corporations based in America (*Crow* 741). Ngũgĩ's formulation of whiteness brings together a constellation of intertwined geopolitical and social hierarchies. The constellation of images in *Wizard of the Crow* show whiteness as a classed, gendered, and raced concept where whiteness comes to symbolize a rich, white (British/Euro-American) male.

In the introduction to *The Modern/Colonial/Capitalist World-System in the Twentieth Century: Global Processes, Antisystemic Movement, and the Geopolitics of Knowledge*, Ramón Grosfoguel and Ana Margarita Cervantes-Rodríguez present the three main "mythologies that mold the way we conceptualize the world today": the myths of universal knowledge, decolonization, and development (xi). By interrogating these myths, Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez want to emphasize that we must necessarily speak from specific gendered, classed, raced, and sexed positions that are, in turn, located within "hierarchies of a given region in the modern/colonial world-system" (xi-xii). In addition, they also add the important dimension of "colonial difference produced by the coloniality of power" (xii). They write,

> Major constitutive elements of the coloniality of power are the racial classification and reclassification of the world's population (for which the concept of "culture" has been instrumental), and the development of the corresponding Eurocentric institutional structures (state apparatuses, universities, church) and epistemological perspectives to reinforce the global racial/ethnic hierarchy associated with such classification. (xii)

To these, Ngũgĩ adds the myth of whiteness. For Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez, these foundational myths are related to "Eurocentric forms of thinking and

knowledge production" of which "Occidentalism, or the discourse about the superiority of the West [is] the common denominator" (xi). Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez write,

> Occidentalism and its corresponding mythologies serve the function of concealing the root causes of European/Euro-American power and privilege systems in the global hierarchy of the world-system and the global designs upon which they have been erected. They have also been efficient in silencing the "Other"; historically defined throughout several centuries of European colonial expansion. Consequently, these myths have perniciously controlled our imagination and eclipsed our representations of alternative ways of life, political options, and epistemologies. (xi)

Ngũgĩ emphasizes the explicit relationship between knowledge production and subject formation—making whiteness not a background field of Eurocentricism as in contemporary word-system analysis theories but a fundamental condition of possibility of postcolonial subject formation—almost inverting Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez's formulation by making whiteness the center around which other intertwined conditions—such as class, race, gender, and colonial difference—revolve.

Narrating the Now and the Not-Yet

In *Wizard of the Crow*, whiteness is represented not solely as a white person or as the colonizer as in *A Grain of Wheat* but more generally as a trope to investigate certain dimensions of the contemporary moment, the multiple undersides of colonial modernity, and ways to work within contemporary systems of subjectification to achieve the goals of anticolonial struggle: *liberatory consciousness*. Given the transformative work Ngũgĩ engages through this trope, indeed in his body of work in general[25], I would position this

[25] In 2014, the Caribbean Philosophical Association awarded Ngũgĩ the Nicolás Guillén Lifetime Achievement Award for Philosophical Literature to honor the "the global importance of his work. According to the committee, which includes the novelists Edwidge Danticat and Junot Diaz, his

novel as part of an anticolonial intellectual tradition in black thought. In line with Fanon's efforts to develop "a political philosophy for decolonization that starts with an account of the psychological harm that colonialism had produced" in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ngũgĩ presents themes about the psychological effects of colonialism and racism, particularly on the black middle class, a recognition of the economic structure of alienation[26], as well as the Eurocentricism of colonial modernity and its effects on the psycho-emotional landscape of black people, with a particular emphasis in this novel on its effects on black leadership, governance, and independence (Appiah, "Foreword"). A tension in *Black Skin, White Masks* dwells within Fanon's call for blacks, rather than returning to a mythical African past, "to adapt to modern European culture" while also freeing themselves from dependence on it—what Fanon calls the psychic structure of dependency that plagues colonized peoples (Appiah, "Foreword"). The work of grappling with black self-contempt based on an identification with whiteness is the core theme that places Ngũgĩ within this tradition. In the Foreword to the reprint of the 1967 edition of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Kwame Anthony Appiah writes, "Black children raised within the racist cultural assumptions of the colonial system, can partially resolve the tension between contempt for blackness and their own dark skins by coming to think of themselves, in some sense, as white. (Hence the "white

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contributions to literary theory, philosophy in literature, African letters, postcolonial criticism, and the struggle for human dignity stand among the best of the age. In the words of Jane Anna Gordon, President of the Caribbean Philosophical Association, 'Professor Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o exemplifies the intellectual and political boldness and courage we encourage and the attention to language and genre that is indispensable to shifting the geography of reason.'" Voyt, Dorothy. "Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o receives the Nicolas Guillen Lifetime Achievement Award." E-mail to Raquel Baker. 21 Feb. 2014.

[26] In the Introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon writes, "The black man's alienation is not an individual question," taking up the economic and social structures that undergird black alienation (11).

masks" of the title). Fanon's approach in *Black Skin, White Masks* focuses on the problems of identity created for the colonial subject by colonial racism" (ix). Ngũgĩ shows that this identification with whiteness is still an issue post-independence, which suggests the ways in which the post-independence culture retains ideological constructs of colonialism, thus Ngũgĩ's use of the term "colonial modernity" to describe the contemporary sociopolitical milieu, taking up where Fanon left off by examining the issue of the effects of racism on the postcolonial African subject.

Both thinkers take up the problem of "the liberation of the man of color from himself" (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 8) and examine the psychic elements that structure experiences of black subjectivity. Fanon's focus is the psychosocial experience of the black subject, which is constructed through economic and mythic or symbolic elements of the social world, which is to say that the black subjectivity that Fanon underscores is a relational experience: the relation between the black man and the white man, as well as the relation between one's objective situation and one's attitude toward it. Fanon's analysis serves as a critique of Sartrean existentialism, which ignores the issue of race. Racialized consciousness leads to the internal experience of the devaluation of the self and the social experience of misrecognition the (white) other due to the functioning of the racial stereotype (Fanon, *Black Skin* 74). The fundamental ground of a subjectivity forged in the ire of self-negation, exclusion, and misrepresentation is a "feeling of . . . having no place anywhere, of being superfluous everywhere" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 76). Here, Fanon previews Bhabha's work on unhomeliness. Fanon's principal aim is to call for a "restructuring of the world" to "make possible a healthy encounter between black and white" (*Black Skin* 82, 80). The first part of this restructuring requires uncovering the

myths that ground the psychic structure of inferiority and, therefore, "impede active understanding" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 81). Ngũgĩ's fiction builds on Fanon, going beyond Fanon's suspicion of black solidarity, allowing us to think through central existential questions about how to be in relation to others. Ngũgĩ's fantastic style in *Wizard of the Crow* challenges the idea that realist aesthetics can properly capture the truth of postcolonial experience.

In expressing the problems of their contemporary moments by examining the experience of black subjectivity, both thinkers emphasize race as an affective experience that is fundamentally based on an economic reality, the function of myth in reproducing this system and the hierarchical values that drive this affective experience, and the necessity of restructuring the world to disrupt these structures. Both thinkers are focused on the aim of creating the new, the aim to deconstruct entrenched psychic/economic structures that position whiteness as the frame of reference; however, both thinkers focus on different tools and strategies in working toward this decolonizing transformation. Both work to critically examine myth: Fanon embraces a psychoanalytic deconstruction of the myths of inferiority while Ngũgĩ stages a surreal literary psychobiological telling/embodiment/manifestation, in Fanon's sense of epidermalization, of these myths. The tools used also suggest the nuanced differences in the specific historico-affective situations being faced that each thinker is targeting through his intervention. Fanon emphasizes the experience of contact, which resonates with the density of the many performances of the colonial encounter; perhaps the most iconic trope of the work is the nausea of being apprehended, seen, as in the repeated traumatic scream in chapter five, Look! A Negro! (*Black Skin* 91). Fanon writes,

> *Maman*, look, a negro; I'm scared!" Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me. I wanted to kill myself laughing, *but laughter had become out of the question.*
>
> I couldn't take it any longer, for I already knew there were legends, stories, history, and especially that *historicity* that Jaspers had taught me. As a result, the body schema attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema. In the train, it was a question of being aware of my body, no longer in the third person but in the triple. In the train, instead of one seat, they left me two or three. I was no longer enjoying myself . . . . I existed in triple: I was taking up room. I approached the Other . . . and the Other, evasive, hostile, but not opaque, transparent, and absent, vanished. Nausea. (90–91, my emphasis)

Fanon figures the primal wound of misrecognition to be how it replaces belonging with longing and fragmentation in line with contemporary theories of black subjectivity that foreground division as an essential characteristic, such as Dubois's theory of double consciousness. A distilled articulation of the problem for Fanon might be the struggle to restore "man to his proper place" based on Fanon's central assumption that "it is the racist who creates his inferior" (*Black Skin* 88, 93). Fanon figures the poignancy of the loss evoked by apprehension and existing in physical proximity to the (white) Other because, for Fanon, "the arrival of the white man" "shattered" the "psychological mechanisms" of the colonized and precipitated "the loss of its basic structure" (*Black Skin* 97). "For," writes Fanon, "not only must the black man be black, he must be black in relation to the white man. The negro has two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself" (*Black Skin* 110). This fundamental unmooring precipitates a fear of being seen as this other abhorrent abhorred thing—a thing that is constructed by its negative relation to whiteness. Fanon moves from Dubois's double consciousness, splintering it into three, contributing to twentieth and twenty-first theories in which black subjectivity is constituted through the experience of division and the psychic structure of

multiplication and disorientation—an orientation that is unsettling and off kilter. Moreover, Fanon's horror is grounded in the visual field, pointing to the petrifying signification of blackness both for the creator ("the racist who creates his inferior") and the one constituted through and by the other. In *Troubling Vision*, Nicole Fleetwood examines how systems of racial inequality are "constituted through visual discourse," posing the central "problem of the black body in the field of vision" (3, 5). Fanon's horror, his nausea, addresses Fleetwood's question about what happens when the symbol of blackness is accepted as real.

In representing these issues of belonging, longing, and misrepresentation in the lived post-independence experience, Ngũgĩ emphasizes the role of whiteness as an internalized structure; rather than the iconic figure of (mis)apprehension, Ngũgĩ focuses on the horror of self-creation—a horror of creation of the self derives not solely from an external other but from the Other as an internalized gaze, which emphasizes a primary legacy of colonial racism on postcolonial African subjectivity being that whiteness serves as an internalized frame of reference that makes the consciousness of the "fact" of blackness a "solely negating activity" (Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* 110). The settler colonial experience in Kenya created a total atmosphere of separation of the races; this segregation coupled with indigenous peoples being alienated from their land creates the visceral and visual reality of whiteness as white supremacy. Rather than the infliction of blackness upon the self, Ngũgĩ freezes the snapshot of the internal nature of whiteness to postcolonial African subjectivity revealing how whiteness undergirds the representation of black subjects *to themselves*. At the very different historical moment of twenty-first-century post-independence, through the figure of white-ache, Ngũgĩ emphasizes

whiteness as a figure that structures the internal relation of the black subject to himself and foregrounds the unconscious wish to be white that Fanon introduces in chapter 4, "The So-Called Dependency Complex of Colonized People": to "force the white man to acknowledge [black] humanity (78). Fanon writes,

> If he is overcome to such a degree by a desire to be white, it's because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that draws its strength by maintaining this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one race over another; it is to the extent that society creates difficulties for him that he finds himself positioned in a neurotic situation. What emerges then is a need for combined action on the individual and the group. As a psychoanalyst I must help my patient to "consciousnessize" his unconscious, to no longer be tempted by a hallucinatory lactification, but also to act along the lines of a change in social structure. In other words, the black man should no longer have to be faced with the dilemma "whiten or perish," but must become aware of the possibility of existence; in still other words, if society creates difficulties for him because of his color, if I see in his dreams the expression of an unconscious desire to change color, my objective will not be to dissuade him by advising him to "keep his distance" ; on the contrary, once his motives have been identified, my objective will be to enable him to choose action (or passivity) with respect to the real source of the conflict, i.e., the social structure. (*Black Skin, White Masks,* 80, Kindle Edition.)

By focusing on the structure of the unconscious—in addition to the objective economic structure—Fanon takes on the legacies of colonial racism and moves toward the significance of imaginative and mythic structures. Without giving up the historico-political ground that Fanon has marked out in his structural analysis—without giving up the centrality of the objective situation: As Fanon puts it, "A given society is racist or it is not"—Ngũgĩ, through the trope of white-ache, articulates a cultural pathology that, as a legacy of colonial modernity and racism, aspires to achieve liberation, equality on the terms that is antithetical to black enfranchisement by defining humanity through the values of a binary system that positions blackness as a negative term (*Black Skin, White*

Masks 85). In other words, by giving it a name, we are able to understand white-ache as something real and therefore are better able to create strategies to transform it. In relation to themes of subjectivity, through white-ache, Ngũgĩ poses the question of the kind of subjectivity formed through the position of self-negation and within a lived context in which existential aspects of freedom are closely tied to the exigencies of the current global market economy. Both Fanon and Ngũgĩ engage with the thematics of identification and an analysis of colonial racism in order to focus on decolonization. This work of decolonization required developing a deconstructive critique to lay the groundwork for the radical remaking of the imaginative structures of the self. Fanon's aim is liberation of unconscious tensions As Fanon explains, "To understand something new requires that we make ourselves ready for it, that we prepare ourselves for it, it entails the shaping of a new form" (95). Ngũgĩ's style does all this while also infusing laughter into the serious tone Fanon assumes.

Keeping It Surreal: Troubling Normative Ideologies of Self

The job of the writer is to make revolution irresistible.
—Toni Cade Bambara

The question of color . . . operates to hide the graver question of the self.
—James Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son"

In time, these traditions of self-hate rooted in colonial times become the everyday.
—Ngũgĩ, *Wizard of the Crow*

By delving into what James Baldwin calls the "unspoken yet profound assumptions and myths[27]" that guide self-perception and self-authorship, Ngũgĩ

[27] "Every society is really governed by hidden laws, by unspoken but profound assumptions on the part of the people, and ours is no exception. It is up to the American writer to find out what these laws and assumptions are. In a society much given to smashing taboos without thereby managing to be liberated

intervenes in the myths that guide self-creation, free ourselves from the myth to investigate the ways in which modes of self-creation promotes or frustrates decolonization.

Ngũgĩ draws from the genre of satire to cohere the elements of his primary representational strategy, which is to combine magical realism with attitudes and values of postcolonial resistance and re-memberance. Ngũgĩ's magical realism is a mixture of realistic and absurd elements that harnesses the revelatory power of satire to re-member black liberatory identification in the face of neo-colonial dismemberment. His representational strategies use imagination, rather than logic, as a mode of transformation and decolonization. As modes of thinking, both imagination and logic are representational systems; as such, both use symbolic techniques to establish perceptions—to become aware of things. However, Ngũgĩ's imaginative mode privileges hyperbole and burlesque over the scientific method and reason. In other words, style matters. It is not only the conceit of the Tower of Babel that organizes the primary themes of the novel but also the very form of the novel itself as a literary work—"a reworking of reality into a symbolic narration"—that allows the novel to foreground questions of representation (Wildenthal 188). This novel narrates liberatory black identification through a series of imaginative representations--transformations, exaggerations, literalizations, oppositions, conceits, and satirical moments. Moreover, the narrative of the development of, or path to, such identification is not represented as a singular, coherent entity, but rather as a complex set of simultaneously interacting, countervailing, and competing stories, songs, dances, knowledges, and memories. In this

from them, it will be no easy matter." (James Baldwin, "The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American" 13).

way, the narrative of decolonization is represented as performative, improvisational, theatrical--as an embodied imaginative practice.

The novel serves as a site of decolonization through the way that these imaginative representations position the reader. As a satire, the novel's formal structure constantly positions the reader to apprehend, re-vision, and question the physical, moral, and intellectual absurdities of imperialism, authoritarian corruption, and despotism. In Book One of the novel, "Power Daemons," Ngũgĩ's trenchant satire represents the uneven relations of power between Africa and the West, which are maintained not only by neo-colonial economic relations but also by the reservoir of stereotypical images in the neo-colonial imaginary. Ngũgĩ represents both of these issues through the stark oppositions, absurdities, and outrages called out in his narration. Describing the scene outside of a luxury hotel frequented by tourists, beggars, and prostitutes alike, Ngũgĩ writes,

> Sometimes the police raided the beggars, but just for show, for Aburĩria's prisons were already full. Most beggars would have been quite happy to be jailed for the meal and a bed. The government also had to be mindful not to upset tourism by sweeping too many beggars off the streets. Pictures of beggars or wild animals were what many tourists sent back as proof of having been in Africa. In Aburĩria, wild animals were becoming rare because of dwindling forests and poaching, and tourist pictures of beggars or children with kwashiorkor and flies massing around their runny noses and sore eyes were prized for authenticity. If there were no beggars in the streets, tourists might start doubting whether Aburĩria was an authentic African country. (35)

The rhetorical and aesthetic force of Ngũgĩ's satire is produced by its searing truth. Here Ngũgĩ astutely pinpoints the way that Africa's difference—its enforced economic inferiority in relation to the West—becomes its greatest commodity. Stereotypical images of decadence become Africa's mark of authenticity. These prized tourist images support

two key myths in the Western imaginary: "*(1) the myth of progress and (2) the myth of white, Western superiority*" (Dinerstein 572). Through the absurd and acerbic afflictions of his characters, Ngũgĩ also illustrates how these two myths are as important in the imaginary of African elites as they are in the Western imaginary.

Ngũgĩ engages with this problem of the African imaginary through his main trope of sickness. In addition to the Ruler's "mysterious illness that defied all logic and medical expertise," that is introduced in Book One, in Book Two, "Queuing Daemons," Ngũgĩ inflicts an elite businessman, Tarjirika, with the "If only" disease; all he can say is "If! If only" (4, 143). Twelve chapters after its introduction, Ngũgĩ reveals Tarjirika's true affliction: white-ache. Tarjirika stammers, If . . . My . . . Skin . . . Were not . . . Black. . . . If only . . . My skin . . . Were . . . white . . . like a . . . white man's . . . skin. . . . Oh, if only my skin were white!" (179). Here, humor works not to express the inexorable colonization of African desire; but, instead, it is used to reveal the salience of white supremacy in the African imaginary. By literalizing internalized colonial values as the psychosis of white-ache, Ngũgĩ is able to expose the irretrievable absurdity of the Eurocentric cultural order that creates such a condition. Here colonial values not only refer to economic and political structures but also to symbolic economies that constitute color hierarchies and relate colors to meaning, worth, and worthiness. As a conceit, the disease of white-ache suggests not a double consciousness, as in Dubois's seminal theory, but a fundamentally fragmented, self-negating consciousness. Ngũgĩ uses humor as a tactic to make manifest the realities of postcolonial identification and the politics of skin color. Externalizing the ridiculous effects of racist neo-colonial symbolic systems and the

hierarchical capitalist order that they undergird serves as a mode of resistance to the authority of such a socio-political order.

Given the specific imperial and colonial histories that hastened Africa's uneven integration into the global capitalist market economy, whiteness has materialized as a powerful trope for success, progress, and possibility. In response, Ngũgĩ's strategy is to materialize and make manifest the continuing social and political realities of such uneven integration, from messianic neo-colonial rule to the deeply racialized discourses that inform postcolonial national and personal identification. Within these discourses, progress is equated to the accumulation of wealth; civilization is equated to social position; and, through a metonymic slippage on the level of cultural representation, whiteness comes to stand in for them all. Due to this slippage, the disparate experience of Africa in relation to the West is read as black barbarity and biological inferiority. Within such a symbolic order, issues of *class* and political hierarchy, such as ruling-class elite *domination,* are represented and internalized as *racial* issues. Given this articulation of representational systems to processes of identification, Tarjirika's If Only disease perfectly foregrounds the relation of self-consciousness to issues of language. The disease represents yearning explicitly as both an interrupted utterance—a stoppage, an interruption of language—and a racial barrier. Through the trope of white-ache, Ngũgĩ represents the effects of race as a social obstruction by literally rendering it as an obstruction of language. Through this figural turn, the disease of white-ache exposes the metonymic slippage that turns *geo-political economic* relations that determine the allocation of power, prestige, and wealth into *racial* experiences. The disease of white-ache clearly illustrates the symbolic economies that are produced as effects of material

economies. Through this figural rendering of white-ache as a literal disease, Ngũgĩ articulates a central tenet of contemporary theories of subjectivity: material practices constitute subject positions. But unlike theoretical texts, Ngũgĩ's literary style articulates the concept concretely—clearly, in such a way that the reader can get hold of the concept and not only see it, but also see it as absurd and self-abhorrent rather than as a naturalized truth. This move underscores one of the primary representational strategies used in the novel: to render life-disavowing socio-political practices literally as stoppages, breaks, and frozen moments—which, in turn, suggests that freedom is motion and affiliation.

Decolonization and anticolonial work begins with the premise of this motion, this capacity for movement and transformation—the capacity for personal liberation—that is defined by overcoming a sense of self that is overdetermined through negation and lack; a positioning of subjectivity that is defined through economic, political, and cultural devaluation. Tarjirika's wish to be white was a sort of existential wish for the end of longing that was inflected by a spectacle economy (mediated through forms of mass media—market forms, celebrity, empire) and therefore formulated as a racial desire to be white. Whiteness is the abstract, complexly mediated, densely symbolically coded form of a wish for power. Ngũgĩ writes, "All along, . . . Tarjirika's use of the word *white* had been a code for *power*. Tarjirika had longed for Whiteness as Power. . . . the actual desire for power came out coded as a desire to be white (*Wizard* 342–43). Tarjirika's desire is discovered when his political rival, Sikiokuu discovers a video tape of an interrogation in which Tarjirika explains about his illness, which he understands as being caused by his "wish to be unimaginably rich" but which the Wizard of the Crow leads him to realize is actually caused by Tarjirika's "longing to be white" (*Wizard* 338). Tarjirika explains, "In

the end, all my thoughts, all my feelings and emotions, were bodied forth by the word *if*" (*Wizard* 338).

This symptom of being stuck on the word *if* takes us outside of a strictly logical framework and into a discursive one—during his one interrogation after he has been tortured, Tarjirika asserts that he can only "speak the truth, even if it clashes with logic" (*Wizard* 337). Both conjunction and noun—connector and object—the word *if* at once carries the sense of contingency and urgency in the sense of the conditions of possibility necessary for some other effect or result to occur. When *if* is used in a protactic phrase in the indicative, acceptance of the truth of the statement is implied; however, Ngũgĩ renders Tarjirika's haltingly revealed protactic phrase in the subjunctive "if only my skin *were* white" ("If," Def. A.1). This sense implies doubt—if not in Tarjirika's mind, in the nuanced form of the content communicated to the reader ("If," Def A. 2). Moreover, Ngũgĩ does not even include a principal clause, or apodosis—the very poetics of the form undermines the utopian, liberatory, possibilities of this conditional statement, disallowing the sense that any truth is being communicated here—if only I were white (doubt) . . . . nothing . . . .

In response to Tarjirika's confession of suffering from "a severe case of white-ache," his interrogator bursts out laughing, exclaiming "You? You? A white man? A white European? With those lips, that kinky hair, and that skin? And that pouch?"—defining blackness through physical and phenotypic externalities, again locating us back with the Fanonian horror of apprehension and the problem of blackness in the visual field (*Wizard* 338). But the figure of white-ache as an illness suggests both physicality and *internality* moving us away from the visual field and the white man as an absolute

measure (as in early nationalist representations) and toward a problem of subjectivity, which is itself mediated, embodied, and contingent. As the narrator explains, "Convictions are far harder to smash than conscious defiance" (*Wizard* 348). Ngũgĩ reinforces this issue through Tarjirika's conversation with his rival, Sikiokuu, who tries to get him to understand "the real significance of whiteness" (*Wizard* 394). Sikiokuu reminds Tarjirika that he did not suffer from the desire simply to be a white man by suggesting that he "did not suffer from an unfulfilled desire to be a poor white," and Tarjirika concedes that he "longed for the power of whiteness" thus revealing the conflation of white skin with military and political power (*Wizard* 349). The illness is a malady on the level of representation and sign.

Ngũgĩ structures the text around the revelation or externalization, and reevaluation of identificatory reference systems encourage active transformation of identity-negating referents. In the novel's dénouement, the Wizard of the Crow has been captured to be forced to make a false confession about the rumors of the Ruler's pregnancy, drive out the demons of defiance possessing the people and making them form queues all over the country, and reveal the hiding place of his love, an enemy of the State, at an internationally televised day of national self-renewal that the Ruler tried to hijack by deeming the general strike day a national holiday and turning it into his own birthday celebration. The Wizard, a man who faces execution if he resists and if he confesses, a man who sees himself as struggling against national and international imperialism—a man of necessity and contingency, perhaps—tries to figure out how he will handle bearing false witness to the crowd and decides he will tell his truth and speak his heart. This moment of the novel's rhizomic development is structured as a retelling of

the Wizard's confession, resembles the end of *A Grain of Wheat* when Mugo is about to make his speech in front of the assembled national crowd. Both men have a choice to make about concealing or revealing the truth. Both ultimately find the strength to tell the truth by reflecting on the women they love. In *A Grain of Wheat*, the realist structure offers a straightforward narration of the moment. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the narrative structure is much more dense, multiply refracting the confession as the narrator's retelling of another character's recounting of his recollections of the day for a group of assembled listeners—so many mediations: Ngũgĩ's writing of the narrator's description of A.G.'s retelling . . . . In addition, the assembly itself is being televised for a national and international audience—widening the audience for the moment itself and thus increasing what's at stake in the confession but also pointing to the ways in which contemporary global culture is mediated through digital technologies, suggesting the accelerated processes of globalization as compared to the historical moment represented in *A Grain of Wheat*—and these technologies inflect the positioning of the self and possibilities for self-definition as the Wizard feels sure he can make his strategic intervention to defy the State because the government would not dare execute him in front of an international audience. Broadcast technology not only affects institutional transformations and formations of the State—the Aburĩrian government is performing a State celebration for an international audience—but also mediates the very conditions of transformations or self-authoring possible for individuals. The Wizard's integrity, tenacity, and resourcefulness enacted a specific form of disorder that allowed for solidarity between people within the framework of binary opposition between the people and the state formulated in the novel's Marxist rhetoric of there being only two "tribes:

producers and parasites" (688). Technology helps to mediate the contemporary, post-Cold-War geopolitical constellations at play that both define the asymmetric power relation that inflect the economic, cultural, and political entanglements that inflect postcolonial African identification.

The Wizard's ultimate decision to be as truthful as he can with the audience so he can delay his imminent execution reinforces the theme that liberation resides in the acts of defiance that allow for a re-evaluation of internalized value systems. The Wizard asks the crowd, "Why see the warts of the land only when reflected in Western eyes?" (*Wizard* 687). While he is meant to use a set of mirrors imported from abroad to divine the location of enemies of the State, the narrator explains, "No, he was not going to play the game of foreign mirrors. The truth he carried within and the eyes of the people were the only mirrors he would use now. . . . Systematically he broke all the imported mirrors, and at this act of defiance people started clapping in rhythm" (*Wizard* 687). As in *A Grain of Wheat*, not giving in to fear, not taking the easy way out and lying or concealing the truth is the choice the protagonists make, and this choice leads to a sense of exhilaration and freedom. To review the moment in *A Grain of Wheat*, Mugo thinks, "Why should I not let Karanja bear the blame?" (*Wheat* 204). The narration continues:

> He dismissed the temptation and stood up. How else could he ever look Mumbi in the face? His heart pounded against him, he felt sweat in his hands, as he walked through the huge crowd. His hands shook, his legs were not firm on the ground. In his mind, everything was clear and final. He would stand there and publicly own the crime. He held on to his vision. Nothing, not even the shouting and songs and the praises would deflect him from this purpose. It was the clarity of his vision which gave him courage as he stood before the microphone and the sudden silence. As soon as the first words were out, Mugo felt light. A load of many years was lifted from his shoulders. He was free, sure, confident.
>
> Only for a minute.

> No sooner had he finished than the silence around, the lightness within, and the sudden freedom pressed heavy on him. His vision became blurred at the edges. Panic seized him, as he descended the platform, moved through the people, who were now silent. He was conscious of himself, of every step he made, of the images that rushed and whirled through his mind with only one constant thread: so he was reasonable for whatever he had done in the past, for whatever he would do in the future. The consciousness frightened him. (204)

Mugo's epiphany brings him to an existential experience of Sartrean nausea. While in *Wizard of the Crow*, after the Wizard's public display of defiance, the crowd rises up in solidarity, which- allows his love, Nyawira, to come to him unseen in the general hubbub of men and women in the crowd declaring, "I am Nyawira!" Here, the Wizard's intense moment of personal integrity and facing all the fears the State can bring to bear against a man culminates in a true moment of national solidarity not just a personal turning point and moment of facing one's own deepest shame and darkest secret. In both novels, the intricacies of the culminating moments complicate unequivocally positive embodiments of national identification. In the case of *A Grain of Wheat*, the official history and glory of national independence is troubled by the personal experiences of betrayal that occur during the war of independence. While the popular saying suggests that all is fair in love and war, the message of the novel underscores a more Gandhian sense of how the path itself defines the ultimate destination, a fairly common theme in early postcolonial works that reflect on how the rigors of war and its bloody practicalities undermine an unequivocal sense of liberation—one, in a sense, has to heal from independence wars and must reconcile the glorious mythological histories constructed against the harsh realities required and divisions imposed to create a sense of national unity.[28] In *Wizard of Crow*,

[28] For paradigmatic example of how ethnic divisions trouble national independence, see Yvonne Vera's, *The Stone Virgins* (2002), which covers the Gukurahundi, the attempted genocide of the Ndebele during

the Wizard's confession opens up a dazzling display of the solidarity of the people in resistance to the State. But the effects of whiteness on postcolonial black African identification undermine this utopian manifestation of solidarity and suggest a more critical investigation and revision of postcolonial subjectivity than is allowed for by the simply formulation that the people must rise up against the State.

The figure of white-ache presents whiteness as a structure of desire inflected by the main structures of colonial modernity: market capitalism and racialism. Ngũgĩ positions whiteness as a discursive presence that colonizes postcolonial African identification and undermines the ability of the postcolonial nation state to be liberatory formation. In the novel, Ngũgĩ uses narrative space to literalize the effects of internalizing the racialist discourses that ground ideologies of national sovereignty. In this way, white-ache becomes a figure that suggests that what is at stake in the liberatory project is "the decolonization of modernity" itself (Ngũgĩ, *Something Torn and New* xi). The next chapter examines how whiteness functions in postapartheid subject formation to continue to affirm key categories of modernity, again pointing to Ngũgĩ's urgent call.

Zimbabwe's independence war, and Nuruddin Farah's *Maps* (1986) about the partition that created the independent nations of Somalia and Ethiopia. For a representative example of gender troubles experiences of national unity, see Ingrid Sinclair's film about the Zimbabwean independence struggle, *Flame* (1996).

CHAPTER III
SIPHIWO MAHALA'S WHITE ENCOUNTERS: MEMORY AND ENTANGLEMENT IN POST-APARTHEID LITERATURE

encounter, *n.*
1. A meeting face to face; a meeting (of adversaries or opposing forces) in conflict; *hence*, a battle, skirmish, duel, etc.
2. Proposed as a name for the rhetorical figure antithesis

encounter, *adv.*
1. opposite, contrary
--*Oxford English Dictionary*

In his second published work, *African Delights*, published in 2011, South African writer Siphiwo Mahala grapples with the "conundrums presented by our particular historical moment" through four short story trilogies written from diverse points of view ("African Delights"). Many of the stories are set in and reflect upon the past, directly relating the author's aim to grapple with South Africa's post-apartheid present to the necessity of contemplating the apartheid past and its legacies. This move emphasizes the significance of memory and the centrality of the production of narratives about apartheid South Africa in the making and understanding of the new South Africa's post-apartheid present. As such, Mahala's invocation of the present tense presents a complex entanglement of temporalities in which the contemporary historical moment itself indexes both South Africa's apartheid past and the new South Africa's emergent future. Part two of *African Delights*, White Encounters, contains three short stories: "White Encounters," "Bhontsi's Toe," and "Hunger." The settings of the stories also echo this temporal entanglement as an element of the author's method that suggests the radical force of the present moment to constitute the future by working on the past. The first two stories in White Encounters grapple with the social and political contexts and power relations of South Africa in the eighties, a time in which the methods of enforcing and resisting

apartheid became increasingly violent. The final story moves forward in time to the nineties, looking at intimate cross-racial relations two years after the implementation of democratic rule in South Africa. The stories present the anxieties and challenges presented by difference and posit the affective possibilities of a politics of entanglement to confront and disrupt the legacies of apartheid's ideological use of white supremacy. These legacies include both the psychic experience of what Fanon calls "epidermalization," or racialized inferiority, as well as the creation of an impoverished reality that is too overdetermined by "the baggage of an old era" (Mahala "African Delights").

Mahala's pieces present the affective economies of fear, desire, and difference that enable and disrupt everyday experiences of entanglement. The story "White Encounters" presents the complex processes of intimacy within the context of asymmetrical, racialized power that characterized apartheid. The story relates several experiences of misidentification fostered by such a context. "Bhontsi's Toe" focuses on the affective economy of fear, while "Hunger" focuses on the entanglement of affective economies of desire and identification, each story showcasing the complex flows of desire and anxiety and the ambivalence of entanglement. Here ambivalence refers to "the circulation of contradictory patterns of psychic affect in colonial [and postcolonial] relations" that cannot be reconciled with each other, meaning that experiences of entanglement do not necessarily overcome the asymmetries of power that characterize apartheid and structure its legacies within post-apartheid South Africa (Moore-Gilbert qtd. in Hook 704). The stories present heightened moments of fear, racialized violence, and desire that occur in everyday situations within apartheid and post-apartheid contexts

with their constitutive power disparities that fuel hierarchical practices of otherness. The stories also offer momentary glimpses of transformation through entanglement, yet in the stories these moments do not transcend the powerful historical and affective contingencies that are at play. This ambivalence of entanglement should always "be understood with reference to a broader and more complex process of identification" (Hook 708). Psychoanalytic frameworks all construct practices of identification through some form of crisis, ranging from psychosexual to psychosocial conflicts whose resolutions determine the normal or abnormal development of the self[29]. This framing of the self through crisis suggests another dimension of Mahala's section title White Encounters, bringing the issue of identification into the mix of what the author is grappling with here. White Encounters thus suggests the discursive encounter with whiteness that frames subjectivity in both apartheid and post-apartheid contexts as well as the entanglement of self and other as a key conflict that structures subjectivity. Mahala's images of entanglement suggest an embodied self that is constituted through its temporal and spatial entanglement with others. Such a vision of the self rewrites ideologies of separation that undergird apartheid and as such suggest that decolonization requires a rethinking of the self through a self-conscious orientation to entanglement. Throughout the pieces, encounters with others, particularly but not exclusively racialized others, are

[29] See *Theories of Personality*, Duane Schultz and Sydney Schultz. In his psychosexual developmental theory, Freud posited that identity, or self-perception, was formed through the resolution or nonresolution of sexual conflicts that were localized in different regions of the body at different ages or stages of development (64). Carl Jung borrowed ideas from physics in developing the theory that the self is primarily constituted through the conflict or opposition of physical energies (104-5). Alfred Adler developed an individual psychology approach in which he posited that each individual makes himself through the basic drive to overcome feelings of inferiority, which are a product of the environment of early childhood environment in which infants are consciously helpless in relation to adults (130, 132). Erik Erikson, in his psychosocial theory of development, suggests that the self is constituted through conflicts that are a result of an individual's confrontation with her environment (211). The resolution of the conflict requires a change in behavior or perspective (211).

fraught with the complexities of affinity and power—the politics of both belonging and self-making itself. In his readings of Frantz Fanon's theories of colonized subjectivity, theorist Homi Bhabha focuses on ambivalence as a key characteristic of the racial stereotype and of power in colonial discourse. Psychoanalytic perspectives also support the ambivalent structure of entanglement as the entangled other is described as "a volatile object, able to give pleasure and anxiety in equal parts" (Hook 722). Through the notion of entanglement, Fanon's key insights about racialized subjectivity are utilized to move the focus from power in the colony to modes of self-making in the postcolony.

Mahala's pieces allow this focus on self-making because his presentation of everyday experiences of entanglement is highly correlated not only to affective economies but also to "a vocabulary of the body"—the aching body; the tortured, synecdochic body as only a toe; the desiring, sexualized, hungry body (*Negotiating the Past* 6). The first and titular piece, "White Encounters," narrated by a little boy who has a toothache and must go to the dentist to get the tooth pulled, begins with the body in pain and is set in Grahamstown in what Mahala describes as "the rural Eastern Cape" ("African Delights"). The story "Bhontsi's Toe," narrated by a slightly older male protagonist, is told in the present tense, recasting as present a story set in the past during a state of emergency. The final story of the section, "Hunger," also begins with the vulnerable, aching, hungry body unable to get its needs met and is narrated by a college student who is looking to satisfy both his real hunger and his metaphorical hunger for intellectual and carnal knowledge. The boys' and young man's narration of experiences of entanglement in the pieces in White Encounters brings out the connection between narratives of self and collective narratives about South Africa's apartheid past and the

post-apartheid present, pointing to the complex levels of entanglement that operate in the text and constitute the subjectivity of the narrators, from the historical and temporal entanglements of the subject to entanglements that are affective and physical. Mahala's stories narrate the Fanonian desiring subject entangled in a historical context. In addition there are the entanglements that constitute the text itself, such as the temporal entanglements of reading—the time of writing and the time of reading.

As a philosophical concept, the notion of entanglement exists in many ancient and contemporary traditions; intellectual, spiritual, and scientific traditions as diverse as Buddhism and the Buddha's experience of enlightenment to quantum physics[30] assert the primacy of connectivity—entanglement—as the primary constituent of the fabric of reality, a property of connectivity that nonetheless gives rise to the basic existential tension of the experience of self and other. In the Western tradition, the notion of entanglement served to replace the Enlightenment's primary metaphor of the world and the subjectivities in it as mechanisms and machines with the world and its subjectivities as living, dynamic systems. The notion of entanglement in South African literary

[30] See Alyssa Ney and David Albert, eds. *The Wave Function: Essays on the Metaphysics of Quantum Mechanic*. In the chapter "Wave Function Realism," Professor David Albert writes, "The most striking and controversial feature of [quantum mechanical realism] is undoubtedly that the stage on which . . . objects must make their appearance, the stage (that is) on which any such understanding of quantum mechanics is going to depict the history of the world as playing itself out, is a mind-numbingly high-dimensional space. . . . And it is obviously going to be incumbent on any such understanding to explain our vivid and deep-seated impression to the contrary. . . .

On the Ghirardi-Rimini-Weber (GRW) theory (or, for that matter, on *any* theory of collapse), the world will consist of exactly one physical object—the universal wave function. What happens, *all* that happen, is that the function changes its shape in accord with the theory's dynamical laws. . . .

The particularly urgent question (again) is where, in this picture, all the tables, and chairs, and buildings, and people are. The particularly urgent question is how it can possibly have come to pass, on a picture like this one, that there appear to us to be *multiple* particles moving around in *three-dimensional* space.

And the thing to keep in mind is that what it is to be a table or a chair or a building or a person is—at the end of the day—to occupy a certain location in the causal map of the world. The thing to keep in mind is that the production of geometrical appearances is—at the end of the day—a matter of *dynamics* (53–54).

criticism is a way to discuss the moral exigencies of community making outside of the institutional discourses that frame the contemporary process of community making as one of truth and reconciliation, such as that of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This framing also connection to notions of temporal entanglement. In her discussion about the relation of South Africa's TRC to nation building, Ingrid de Kok argues that memory should not be a silencing; "instead the task of memory is to reconstitute turbulence and fragmentation, including painful reminders of what we were, and what we are"—this assertion again foregrounds the complex and entangled temporalities of subjective experience (*Negotiating the Past* 5). Moreover, as Eduard Fagan notes, memory is a unique element of the South African constitution itself in relation to "other constitutions which are typically forward looking," while in the South African constitution memory serves "to keep the significance of the past alive and active," foregrounding the "significance of keeping older chapters unclosed and simultaneously present" (*Negotiating the Past* 13). The pieces in White Encounters do just that by inscribing the young men's narration of key moments of entanglement in their lives in the present post-apartheid reading moment. The complex modes of entanglement involved in reading, writing, remembering and creating may serve as a useful strategy in positing ethical modes of community making that can disrupt ideologies of separateness, hierarchical difference, and affiliation based on race and color that at work in post-apartheid contexts. Moreover, to take up the concerns of entanglement is to reassert the primacy of Ngũgĩ's call for the decolonization of the mind. It is to recognize that the intimate spheres of the self and modes of identification, affiliation, and desire are important foci of decolonization in order to begin to challenge the hold of ideologies of

racialized belonging, modes hierarchized differentiation, and what Bhabha calls modes "of representation of otherness" ("The Other Question" 19).

The Racializing Gaze as an Encounter with Imperial Whiteness

An opening image in the story "White Encounters" of the narrator under the gaze of a historical monument nicely sets up the entanglements that structure subjectivity—the complex temporalities of the present and the entanglement of "racial/cultural/historical otherness" (Bhabha 19). The figure of the monument articulates how the settler gaze is part of contemporary spatial practices that contribute to subject making through how it positions the other and orders what is visible and what is forgotten. The particular version of history the monument constructs valorizes whiteness in its production of a sanitized version of history that can be easily consumed. This version of history also contributes to the production of particular kinds of power relations in its rearticulation of British heritage and white identification. The black experience as object is meant to hoist up the settler experience as a proper subject-making project and to legitimate the white subject. After the narrator has left the dentist and is accompanying his mother to work, he notes, "The 1820 Settlers' Monument gazed at us from the top of a hill on the opposite side of town" (Mahala 65). The figure of the monument foregrounds the act of commemoration and the themes of memory and remembrance and, more important, sets up an official statement of values that the narrator's experiences then contradict, setting up a returned gaze constituted through everyday black experience. The monument's personification foregrounds the white encounter that frames this part of Mahala's short story cycle—the nineteenth-century encounter with British settlers—as a living presence described in terms of the Fanonian account of the white gaze—the scopic relation that creates a

fractured black subject—a process that subjects the one viewed as an object for others. This process of subjectification embodies, or in Fanon's terms epidermalizes, the black subject as an object for others and as no ordinary object but specifically as an abject object. Through the figure of the monument, Mahala highlights the relationship between processes of memorialization and subjectification. This image also associates the gaze with opposition and specifically with spatial opposition, nicely bringing the always present context of the apartheid ideology of separation and separateness into relation with issues of subjectification.

The figure of the monument connects acts of commemoration to the temporal and historical entanglements of the subject and further connects these entanglements to issues of identification, belonging, and affiliation. The narrator's experience continually provides a counter narrative to the official history valorized through the monument as an act of commemoration. The monument's opening date of 1974 allows the reader a general placement in time. In addition, Mahala describes the setting of the story as "the emergency years of the eighties, where we are exposed to the painful rhythms of a society in distress," allowing for a more specific placement between 1986 and 1988 ("African Delights"). The Grahamstown Foundation describes the monument as a living memorial and "a national heritage institution" that "is an active participant in our developing nation, and commemorates the contribution of the 1820 settlers, and other English speaking immigrants, to the development of South Africa, drawing particular attention to two areas of British Settler heritage that benefit all South Africans—the English language, and the democratic tradition" ("About Us"). While the monument's official meanings valorize the English language, in the short story, English is positioned as a

separating language. The narrator's mother works as a maid for a white family and allows the narrator to play with her employer's six-year old son, who speaks English, which the mother refers to as "white people's tongue" (Mahala 66). The narrator wonders how he will be able to "play with the white boy whose tongue [he doesn't] understand" (Mahala 67). Here, the alienating qualities of the English language within the social milieu of apartheid is foregrounded, disrupting the sense of its value as a heritage for all South Africans.

The monument's subjectifying/racializing gaze gives rise to misidentification, which undermines the monument's official story of a democratic ethos. Fanon, whose psychoanalytic approach "speaks explicitly of the experience of being black in a racist milieu where power is white," theorized that the reifying white gaze produced a subject steeped in a misrecognition, "what Homi Bhabha refers to as the "white man's artifice inscribed on the black man's body" (Davids 11, qtd. in Nuttall 164). Mahala brings in the issue of misrecognition through the ending of the story in which the narrator's father is accused of stealing a car by a white policeman, but later another white man comes to say he knows the culprit is not the narrator's father. In this way, the themes and key images of the story again tie whiteness to tropes of watching, looking, seeing, visibility, and surveillance, what South African literary theorist Sarah Nuttall refers to as "the scopic economy of race and identity" (64). The gaze of the monument relates to subjectification and also to the "context of profound political surveillance" (Nuttall 65).

The figure of the monument suggests that the very architecture of the landscape is part of the subjectification process, highlighting the dominant role of visual culture and the relation of whiteness to apartheid's visual economy, which undergirds the ways of

seeing and social and spatial relationships promoted by apartheid ideology. Mahala's narrator makes the sentient observation that the cityscape itself is part of the subjectification process, the effects of which include a kind of estrangement that is connected to both the white settler colonial gaze and the explicit racial segregation policies of apartheid dictated by the National Party, which ruled from 1948 to 1994. The description of "the top of the hill on the opposite side of town" carries the sense of hierarchy and binary opposition, key effects of Fanon's account of the subjectification process for colonized peoples, and opposition itself being a key sense of the term *encounter*. In a telling comment on *TripAdvisor* about the monument that resonates with the sense of the narrator's invocation of the monument, wideyed_wander posts, "Not sure why someone decided to build such a huge and forbidding building on top of the mountain and away from town" ("Practical Rather Than Aesthetic"). Two other posts on the *TripAdvisor* site suggest the opposition in experience that may be the intended end of the monument's effects to support the experience of black alienation and disenfranchisement, which is at the heart of apartheid as a social and political relation. User Potcholdboy of Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape writes,

> I am a direct descendant of the 1820 Settlers and proud of it. This memorial has always impressed me because it is not a silent stone edifice with no purpose other than to commemorate. Instead, it is a living memorial—a cultural centre of the city of Grahamstown. Conference Centre, Concert Hall, Theatre, function venue, lecture hall and located on a scenic hilltop with lovely views of the city. It is a fitting reflection of the Settlers who came to this country, faced and overcame many hardships, built up a viable infrastructure, cultivated industry, agriculture, education, missionary endeavours and planted a rich cultural heritage.

And user Springbuck-kwa comments, "This statue makes one so acutely aware of the British people who came and settled in and served our land — from the 1820s" ("This

Group"). These comments highlight how the narrator's experience serves as a counter narrative to the monument as an official expression of collective memory about the social meanings of the ongoing settler colonial project, which allow for a sense of belonging through exceptionalism—the construction of the extreme and privileged value of British language and cultural traditions, which are themselves contradicted by the black experience. As part of the visual public sphere, the monument serves as a reminder of how representations of the past were grounded in the exigencies of the apartheid-era present.

Because commemorative sites serve also as sites of forgetting, it is important to unpack not only the visual but also the affective economy of whiteness—"the production and exchange of images" and meanings of whiteness—the monument supports through its social meanings, which have explicit emotional content (Newbury 261). The use of the word "economy" focuses on the systemic "production and exchange" of emotion within the field of vision. Deborah Poole explains,

> The word "economy" suggests that the field of vision is organized in some systematic way. It is also clear that this organization has as much to do with social relationships, inequality, and power as with shared meaning and community . . . it also suggests that this organization bears some—not necessarily direct—relationship to the political and class structure of society. (Poole 1997, 8 qtd. in Newbury 261)

The monument constructs feelings of gratitude and empathy toward the inheritances of British settler colonialism. In contrast, the narrator's description suggests the rather ominous, panopticon-like nature of the statue's gaze, suggesting that it relates to feelings of discomfort. Philosopher George Yancy writes, "Whiteness, as a value-creating power, creates a distorted black body/self through the use of theories and practices that define and reinforce certain conceptions of the black body/self" (11). These practices include

segregation, public commemoration, and myth making, all of which have psychoaffective consequences. This affective positioning facilitates social subordination and the appropriation of black land, labor, and resources.

Decisively, the monument gazes at the narrator and his mother, suggesting the overarching imperial nature of whiteness in everyday life and the specifically racial form of subjectification whiteness—performed here specifically as the white gaze—undergirds (Yancy 18). Yancy explains the historical weight of this act:

> In the presence of whiteness, black folk had to show respect, had to acknowledge, in so many ways of humiliating genuflection, that they were not equal to white folk. Hence, white folk controlled the direction, and structure, of the gaze. For a black person to return the gaze would have meant, even for that brief moment, that whites had lost control on the direction of the emanation of power, the capacity to control what and how things are seen. (15)

For Yancy, the returned gaze means "that blacks [refuse] to play the game—albeit a very serious and often deadly game—of whiteness," suggesting what African philosopher Clevis Headley refers to as the "critical confrontational" dimension of Mahala's work in presenting everyday experiences that serve as counter narratives or returned gazes (16, 19).

In "White Encounters," the author puts the sense of *encounter* as a meeting, a rhetorical figure, and an opposition in play. The narrator's momentary encounter with the figure of the monument provides a sense of the author's key work as an intervention into memory through the trope of a child's narration of and reflection on everyday events. I take the monument to be a key figure of modernity in terms of its relation to the commemoration of the settler colonial project, its establishment the white gaze, and its racializing and subjectifying effects, and its imbrication with science as key category of

modernity.[31] In Simon Gikandi's essay "Reason, Modernity, and the African Crisis," in which he reflects on reason as a key episteme of modernity, he explains Achille Mbembe's definition of a figure—specifically the figure of crisis in the postcolony—as a performative device as it is "simultaneously a symptom of . . . life and a mode of apprehending and living" (146). Through figures, "people 'simultaneously circumscribe a field of both constraints and possible, reasonable and legitimate action' (Mbembe and Roitman 1995: 325)" (Gikandi 146). The stated purpose of the monument, which includes a theater, lecture venues, and meeting rooms, is "to encourage free and open debate and discussion, freedom of association, and . . . freedom of expression and creativity," the idea and principles of democracy being a primary nominal figure in the monument's social meaning, spatial design and organization, and function (Grahamstown Foundation, "The Monument"). In his discussion of democratic will formation, Jürgen Habermas, a key philosopher of rationality, makes a distinction between two opposing modes of communication—strategic, instrumental modes of communication and communicative or understanding-oriented modes of communication and social action. The narrator's experience of the monument as a living being gazing upon him confounds the distinction Habermas makes—highlighting the ways in which the subjugating effects of the monument make it difficult to separate the project's aim to share and exchange ideas in a democratic tradition from the larger strategic purpose of the settler colonial project; thus, the social meanings of the monument contribute to uneven and specifically opposing rather than democratic modes of collective subject formation, undermining the

[31] The Grahamstown Foundation explains science as one of the key aims of the monument: "The Foundation promotes a culture of science in South Africa by providing scientists with opportunities to make science accessible to all; showing that science, engineering and technology permeate business and everyday life; encouraging enquiry into the origins and different disciplines of science" ("The Sciences").

monument's emancipatory purpose of commemorating the principles of democracy (Huttunen and Heikkinen 307; Saayman Hattingh and Gaede 500; Schaefer et.al 2013). The child's anamnestic narration presents the story of how his mother is fired from her job as a maid because she takes her son to work with her and allows him to play with the white child she cares for. While the monument's charter is "to enrich the educational and cultural life of the people of South Africa 'that all might have life and have it more abundantly[32],'" its association with freedom is sharply undercut by the narrator's experience in all the stories in this part, which focuses on the inequalities of life, and the author's description deftly emphasizes the inequality manifest in the settler colonial project as an institution and its effects as a form of modern subjectivity (Grahamstown Foundation, "The Charter"). These issues of subjectification and decolonization are key points of reference of modernity itself. The "White Encounter" section foregrounds the key issues of modernity— racialized modes of subjectivity and relationality as opposition—focusing on the need to decolonize the white encounter and its specific subjugating effects, these effects being a key failure of coloniality as a primary social and spatial relation of modernity because coloniality and racialized subjectivities produce estrangement and alienation. In his reading of Mbembe's work on the postcolony, Gikandi lays out Mbembe's key argument that "binary oppositions . . . cloud our understanding . . . because they are constructed on a logic that cannot sustain the capacity for human subjects to reflect on and transcend their conditions of possibility" (146). This

[32] This inscription is part of Fountain Court, "the symbolic heart of the monument," which is part of the improvements added to the monument when it was rebuilt in the post-apartheid period after a fire destroyed the original monument in 1994 (Grahamstown Foundation, "The Monument," "Fountain Court"; SA-Venues.com 1999-2015). These words would not have been present at the time the narrator of "White Encounters" was telling his story.

issue certainly speaks to the problem of misidentification and also points to the issue of reflection, which is an inherent structure of the narration. The importance of reflection is related to Mbembe's analysis of the postcolony and his diagnosis of a key failure of modernity and African politics: that "institutions of power . . . legitimize themselves by producing signs that disable self-reflection" (Gikandi 146). The importance of broader communal or shared moments of reflection are also related to contemporary critiques of modernity and postmodern readings of the failure of modernity. Gikandi notes that "modernity in Africa . . . has been aptly defined as 'an imaginary construction of the present in terms of a mythic past'" (147). The monument as a specific kind of presentation of history that also promotes forgetting works very much in line with psychoanalytic theorist Slavoj Žižek's analysis of violence. In *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Žižek posits that visible violence is enabled through two objective forms of violence: the "'symbolic' violence embodied in language and its forms, what Heidegger would call 'our house of being' . . . that pertains to [language's] imposition of a certain universe of meaning" and "'systemic' violence, or the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" (1–2). The focus on 1820s settlers' traditions of democracy, such as free speech and public debate, and the English language silences Grahamstown history "as an armed post, from which English settlers, brought here in 1820 to buffer the Cape Colony from the Xhosa tribes to the east, began their bloody cavalry raids" (McNeil). The monument also stands as a mode of public memory meant to resist and undercut Afrikaner nationalism and the state's Afrikaner leadership in the context of Anglo-Boer tensions and the structural violence of black exclusion. As such, reflection on the past becomes important in constructing national

identification and a critical understanding of the past that can challenge and rework mythic perceptions and address the symbolic and structural violence of whiteness as a racializing gaze. The narration also serves as a form of personal reflection that allows for a way to better understand, critically analyze, and deconstruct ongoing subjectifying effects related to space, the white gaze, and the legacies of settler colonialism[33].

Apartness in a Dangerous World: South Africa in the 1980s

> Strong security forces with contented members are of the utmost importance in today's dangerous world.
> --P.W. Botha, twelve-point plan total strategy for survival, 1979 (Gutteridge 4)

> Where militarism rules, truth is always the first casualty.
> --Reverend Peter Storey, "Must I Cadets at School? A Guide for Scholars and Their Parents," Grahamstown Advice Centre on National Service /Conscription (SAHA)

The monument's commemoration of British settlers' traditions of democracy, free speech, and public debate stands in stark contrast to the historical context of 1980s South Africa, a time when two different States of Emergency decrees were in place from 1985–1990 and the political climate is actively antidemocratic. Organized resistance against unequal development, inferior black health and education systems, and black unemployment is met with increased repression from the government, with a full or partial state of emergency being declared in 1985 (martial law), 1986 (comprehensive state of emergency), and 1988, including large-scale detentions and increased township violence (Gutteridge 118, Hattingh and Gaede 503, Simpson 85). In the face of such decrees, dissent, anti-apartheid protest, forms of speech and journalistic reportage, and some forms of assembly became illegal (SAHA). Of course, the states of emergency

[33]Let's remember that the 1820 Settlers National Monument still stands as a figure that is part of making sense of the space of Grahamstown and the national space more broadly based on its positioning as a national monument and through the curating organization's goal to contribute to the nation through its vision and charter (Grahamstown Foundation, "Our Contribution to the Nation".)

themselves occurred within the larger context of apartheid, a context in which blacks, rather than being heirs to a democratic tradition, were disenfranchised; discriminated against; and subject to policies of detention, active underdevelopment, exclusion, and exploitation. In the midterm 1981 elections in which Prime Minister P.W. Botha endeavored to achieve a reform mandate, "all the white political parties rule out the possibility of majority rule based on the principle of one-man one-vote in a unitary state," and key nonwhite leaders admit that this basis of democracy—representation and investing political power in the people—is not foreseeable in the near future (Gutteridge 3). The states of emergency is the government's response to both internal and external exigencies within a general governmental framing of security as the key issue. The official story emphasizes that insecurity is caused by increasing communist-supported incursion rather than by the apartheid policy of separate black development (read: explicit black underdevelopment) itself (Gutteridge 108). In her scholarship about popular resistance and township uprisings from 1984–1989, Thula Simpson explains,

> Mass protest against the apartheid system reached unprecedented levels during the 1980s as acts of resistance ranging from school and rent boycotts to strikes and open violence became commonplace. From September 1984 the scale of protest escalated when insurrection commenced in the townships. (76)

Simpson describes the 80s as "a period in which popular protest rose and was beaten back, only for it to re-emerge stronger than before, contributing to the state seeking a negotiated settlement (76).

During the 80s, the affective quality of apartheid politics begins to move "from white supremacy to white survival and white identity" in the context of "adapt or die" reform rhetoric (Gutteridge 2). This trope of whiteness under siege colors the affective

economy that undergirds forms of self-making in the 1980s. Yancy makes a case for the significance of whiteness to black subjectivity that is quite apt to the context of South Africa in the 1980s:

> It is black people who must live the reality of whiteness expressed in the form of black unemployment, inferior health care, inferior education, police brutality, ontological criminalization . . ., lower wages, higher incarceration rates, and so on. For black people, such conditions constitute a space of existential being-in-the-world; a space of being and suffering that is metadiscursive. (16)

For Yancy the decolonization of this metadiscursive space, "going beyond whiteness . . . not . . . through rational argument but through a continuously affirmed refusal to prolong the ontological and existential project of whiteness" (19). While the struggle against apartheid becomes increasingly organized and staged within a variety of sectors in the 80s—the community, church, workplaces, trade unions, and armed guerilla struggle—it does not become more integrated, which might allow for ideological challenges to the reign of hierarchal whiteness. The South African regime saw the 80s as a time of both supportive conservative allies in the US and London as well as an encroaching Soviet threat, which included support of bordering decolonization movements and the internal anti-apartheid struggle (Gutteridge 5). The 70s and 80s saw the end of the Portuguese empire; the decolonization of the nearby and bordering countries of Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe; and the continued freedom struggle of neighboring Namibia against South African control with increased support from independent Angola (Gutteridge 2, 10). These external regime changes fostered the anti-apartheid movement and internal black aspiration, which swelled in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising in June 1976 and developed into nationwide actions from 1984 to 1986 (Gutteridge vii). The

80s, being a critical period of resistance as the last full decade of apartheid rule, saw the intensification of armed guerrilla struggle against the apartheid regime, particularly in the form of bombings of both civilian and economic targets, according to research from Indicator Africa (Battersby 8). The year 1981 saw a change in governmental response to guerilla activity with the "first direct commando assault on the ANC headquarters" in Mozambique (Gutteridge 14). Despite this anti-guerilla response, the South African government's nonaggression agreements with the bordering states of Mozambique and Swaziland[34] led guerillas to begin to create bases within South Africa itself, leading to a rise in military-based resistance actions (Simpson 77). The reforms of the 1980s reflect policies of separation; for example, the constitutional reform of 1983 includes participation by Indians and those classified as "coloured" but excludes Africans (Lodge 32). William Gutteridge, director of the Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, notes, "the Coloured and Indian elections held in August 1984 provoked the most serious and sustained wave of black violence which South Africa had ever experienced" (viii). The divisiveness of the political context in which coloured political access expands while blacks continue to be marginalized also creates a local affective economy in which nonwhites do not trust or accept the genuineness of reform even as the international context suggests the increasing impossibility of the defensibility "of an all-white South Africa" (Gutteridge 26, 20).

[34]President P. W. Botha signed the Nkomati Accord with Mozambique in March 16 1984 and similar agreement in 1982 with Swaziland that called for each country to "cease support for organisations engaged in armed struggle" (Gutteridge 94, Simpson 77). The Nkotami agreement established a Joint Security Commission "to oversee the agreement to deny the use of either of the two territories as bases, training centres or thoroughfares for the passage of forces hostile to the other" (Gutteridge 96). The title "president" comes from the terms of "the new constitution, inaugurated in September 1984" (Gutteridge 118).

The context of affective mistrust, political disenfranchisement, and censorship fostered the ideological work of apartheid and separate development and leads to impoverished official and unofficial archives of 1980s South Africa. In an interview with SABC News, Mahala stated that his goal for *African Delights* as his second published book was to reach and be received well in South Africa before anywhere else. Mahala's trope of childhood narration serves as a strategic from of public memory that takes on the task of simple rather than overly intellectual documentation of everyday life in the 80s. The strict censorship laws of the 80s restrict the ability to document the everyday sense of struggle. Mahala's short stories function as a curation of memory that opens up the private quotidian world and documents the relation of practices of identification to whiteness within the 80s ethos of sustained "black and white besiegement," rebellion, and resistance (Gutteridge 20). Mahala's short stories work as interventions to decolonize public memory. In "White Encounters," the narrator's experience asserts the difference between lived black experience and the official statements of memory public modes of commemoration comprise. Silencing nonwhite experience and replacing it with an official version of history frames the context of the 80s. In his research on South African political symbols, Mfaniseni Fana Sihlongonyane writes,

> During apartheid, history was scripted and relayed largely on the perspective of prominent white men. Under the new ANC-led dispensation, official storytelling has followed the same recipe. Voices that were marginalized in the past continue to be silences today, in order to provide an image where the 'new' South Africa came from and where it is headed that appeals to gung-ho tourists, eager to capture and consume South Africa's much lauded 'peaceful transition'. (206)

Because these practices of silencing continue in the post-apartheid era, decolonizing literatures become key to challenging the ideological and symbolic legacies of separate development.

The Intimacy of Apartness

The political ideologies and practices of affiliation during the 1980s show the dynamics of entanglement and racialized separation. These economies influence black resistance ideologies from Pan-Africanisms of the late nineteenth century, the cultural nationalisms of the early twentieth century, and Negritude of the 1930s to Black Power of the 1970s. The black consciousness groups of the 60s and 70s "looked forward to a nonracial society but argued that whites should not play an active role in black opposition groups"; these conceptions were influenced by earlier Africanist and pan-Africanist modes of thinking of that defined African identification in line with global forms of blackness (Larson 25–6, Thomas 228). The resistance movements of the 1980s reflect the ethos of separation that undergirded the broader ideological commitments of apartheid, contributing to the affective economy of separation. In 1980s South Africa, black resistance was emerging out of the ideologies of separation and conceptions of hierarchical difference engendered in the context of apartheid ideologies of apartness. The recession in the 80s increased the economic and social disparities between "the propertied and the poor" (Lodge 31). Much like the African nationalisms that defined African identification both racially and culturally in opposition to whites, a centrally defining principle of black consciousness politics and rhetoric of the 1980s remains "the exclusion of whites from black politics" (Lodge 145). Black identification and political modes of resistance in the 1980s were formed in the crucible of separation on all levels—

the social, intellectual, cultural, and organizational opposition of blacks and whites. South African nationalist thinking defines emancipation through the restoration of land from white settlers and the separation of African and settler cultural, political, and social spheres. At this time the key dynamics of philosophies of black consciousness are fueled by the dynamics of racialized separation and entanglement within the context of expanding black educational opportunity, consumer power, and institutionalized political power from organizations such as trade unions that allowed blacks to share "space" with whites. Add to this the economic dynamics of recession and mass unemployment that magnified the racializing effects of the distance between blacks and whites (Lodge 200). Over the course of his political thinking, the leader of the African nationalist Pan African Congress, Robert Sobukwe, moved from exclusionary forms of racially based definitions of African identification by "acknowledging the possibility that one day whites, too, might consider themselves African," moving to a political ethos that emphasized entanglement (Lodge 193).

Mahala explores the everyday intimacies that constitute apartness through the racializing gaze—itself given within a context of black resistance that also emphasized apartness. Identification as an entangled social process of self-making is a key part of the structure of exclusion. In the pieces in this section, Mahala grapples with issues of belonging and affiliation; the personal dimensions of these processes are always played out in the context of national understandings of these issues. Throughout "White Encounters," the narrator, trying to stay true to the child's perspective of the past he is telling, articulates the differences between white and black people through both his own observations and through overhearing the conversations of adults. Within the context of

the separateness of apartheid South Africa and the issues of subjectification and epidermalization already brought into play most aptly through the figure of the monument, the narrator's mother also brings out the complex issues of entanglement and intimacy when she takes her son to work with her and is fired for allowing her black son to play with the white son of her employer. When her husband chides her for admitting she will miss her employer's son, Mark, she exclaims, "He's my child too. He is that big today because I breastfed him when he was an infant. . . . And we are separated today, just like that, after six years!" (Mahala 73). The climax of the short story comes when a white policeman comes to the narrator's home and accuses his father of stealing a car. The narrator thinks, "Until that day, I had always looked up to my father. I knew my father was invincible. But at that moment (The policeman is asking the boy if his father stole the car while touching the gun at his waist.), I wondered what my father could do against such an enormous white man" (Mahala 76). The two poles that animate "White Encounters," the short story and the section, are this entangled intimacy that occurs within the context of a state powered through racialized violence and exclusion and the hatred such exclusion and white power inspires—the result of which causes the narrator of "White Encounters" to declare, "I hate white people" (Mahala 77).

Necklacing, Entanglement, and Belonging: The Case of "Bhontsi's Toe"

> Between September 1984 and February 1987, 660 people were burned to death, over 3,000 of these were through necklacing. Two hundred thirty-three of the burnings were in the Eastern Cape.
> --Tom Lodge, "Black Consciousness and the Left" (142).

The second piece in White Encounters, the short story "Bhontsi's Toe," told from the point of view of an eleven-year-old boy, centers around how the state of emergency disrupts the experiences of childhood and causes the narrator to reflect on ideological

practices of belonging and affiliation. The political context is outside of the young narrator's consciousness. For example, the young boy asserts, "I don't know what they want to liberate us from" (Mahala 80). While the naïve narration decenters the polemical historic-political level of the story, the declarative assertions of the child narrator pack an emotional punch, for example when the narrator says, "I don't want to be an *impimpi.* I don't want to be a comrade, either. I just want to be a child. I want to play soccer and be happy everyday" (Mahala 81). Two key images of entanglement frame the story again suggesting the two poles of representations of whiteness. The first is a soccer game and the second is the necklacing of a twelve-year-old friend of the narrator. The narrator explains how this method is used by the people to kill police as well as to kill *impimpis*—informants who give police information about comrades fighting in the liberation struggle—connecting the image to tropes of surveillance. This image of the necklace perhaps is the most profound image of entanglement as it as once carries a sense of intimacy and violence—the positive valence of a gift of jewelry that wraps around the neck and the negative sense of being bound with a tire and set on fire. The essentially orphaned Bhontsi gets money by running errands for the police and generally hanging around them for cast-off food. Despite his ultimate fate, the reader gets the impression Bhontsi is no traitor but a young boy trying to survive—his father is a migrant worker who left while his mother was pregnant, his mother is dead, and his sisters work odd jobs and serve as prostitutes for the police—again tying racialized identities to issues of misrecognition. Within the context of White Encounters, "Bhontsi's Toe" focuses on the eminent violence that seems to erupt at any moment in the township setting during the state of emergency—from a soldier patrol that sends the narrator under the cover of his

bed with a shirt doused in water to protect him from teargas to a group of young boys led by the character Bhongo turning their slingshots onto innocent ducklings or the final scene in which, as the narrator flees the boys' killing spree, he narrator runs into the horrific violence that claimed all of Bhontsi's body minus his infamous toe.

The context of the state of emergency refers to a clash between white nationalism and black resistance. Bhontsi explains to the narrator that the state of emergency "means the soldiers are looking for terrorists at night" (Mahala 85). The scene of the police patrol coming through the township again ties whiteness, specifically white power, to regimes of surveillance. The emotional center of the story is perhaps the two poles created by the violence Bhontsi ultimately suffers one the one hand the ecstatic joy the boys experience through the fulfillment of the undeniable wish for two groups of children to play with each other—one group being the narrator and his black and coloured playmates and the other being a group of white school children who "have been taken into the military," suggesting that the ending of childhood is not simply a black experience (86). The narrator first describes the fear as the enlisted children approach in military vehicles:

> There is no bed to hide under. There are no parents to protect us. Even Bhontsi is not here. We are just standing here, not knowing what to do. If we run, they will shoot us. If we stay, they will torture us. (Mahala 85).

When one of the narrator's friends informs him that the soldiers are actually school children, the narrator is doubtful because "[t]hey are wearing real uniforms, they ride real Casspirs, and they are carrying real guns. But the prospect of playing with white people is too enticing for me to object" (Mahala 86).

Within in the deeply segregated space of the township within the broader context of South Africa's apartheid ideology of separate development and the daily racialized

violence of the state of emergency the boys create a moment of free play. The narrator recounts, "They form one team. And we form the other. I don't know how many players there are in the field. There is no referee. We just play, not caring about soccer rules" (Mahala 86). As the boys laugh and play, the ominous tone of the story, which begins with the exposition of Bhontsi's poverty and how the other boys make fun of him and then turns to the terror of necklacing and police patrols, lifts for a moment. The narrator reports,

> They kick us with their army boots when they try to take the ball from us. We don't mind because we play fancy tricks on them and they keep chasing our shadows. They barely touch the ball. I even put the ball through one's legs. He turns hurriedly, trying to catch up with me. I put the ball through his legs again. Miki bursts out laughing. The soldier kicks him gently on the buttocks. (Mahala 86)

It is not the sense of a turning of the tables that makes this scene powerful but the way the author is able to capture the affective connection the boys make within the multiple contexts of separation and the deep desire the boys have to play with each other—to play across institutionalized, ideological, racialized difference. Even as clouds gather and a hard rain begins to fall—an elegant metaphor for all the forces swirling around these boys—for the boys, "the game is just too nice to abandon. . . . No one wants to stop playing" (Mahala 86, 87). Mahala writes these forces into the fabric of the story from the political issues of Botha's state of emergency and the black resistance of the comrades to the economic issues of the "existing inequalities of power and wealth" that undergird white entitlement and black poverty, most prominently embodied by Bhontsi who wears no shoes and walks around half-naked because, as the narrator notes, "His clothes are always torn" (Giroux qtd. in Davis xiii; Mahala 87). The ever-present force of white entitlement frames the seemingly immutable forces that impinge upon the boys

influencing the sense of the uncrossable distance between black and white. For example, the narrator notes he is the only boy with soccer shoes because his father found a pair in a white man's garden, he thinks, "White people are lucky; their gardens even grow soccer boots" (Mahala 87). After the hard rain ends the interracial soccer game, a rainbow appears that the boys chase, suggestive of the coming of Mandela's rainbow nation.

The powerful scene of the boy's desire to play together suggests the affective possibilities of entanglement. The brief respite of this scene, framed by the racialized identification of the two groups, is indicative of how Mahala brings out the two poles of racialized difference on the one hand and intimacy and affective entanglement on the other. These poles frame both the stories in White Encounters and the broader meanings of whiteness in the African literatures explored here. The boys' desire allows them to manifest their entanglement within systems of racialized difference. This desire doesn't destroy the larger systems but provides a space in which to traverse them.

On a political level, affective entanglement suggests the need for practices of affiliation that move beyond racialized nationalisms. In *South Africa in the Twentieth Century*, James Barber argues that South Africa's twentieth-century history can be understood as a struggle "to establish a nationalism" largely through the conflict between British imperialism and Afrikaner nationalism (2). Given these two significant forms of racialized nationalisms, I would also add that the history of South Africa can be understood through the lens of whiteness and the struggle to establish a nationalism based on whiteness—whether that be British or Boer/Afrikaner. Given Barber's key argument as a starting point, I would argue that racialized nationalisms are significant foundational points for imperialism and colonization. Hence, challenging racialized nationalisms can

be a useful strategy in developing ongoing processes of decolonization. What Mahala brings to the table in his stories in White Encounters is how acknowledging desire and entanglement can serve as a tactic for self-conscious practices of identification and decolonization—and certainly serves as a central theme and the power of the stories in this section. Rather than eradicating difference, the concept of entanglement as what Henry A. Giroux calls an "affective identification" may be productive in allowing for decolonization through the renegotiation of systems of difference, such as race, class, and gender, when linked to an inclusive state-oriented vision, such as Mandela's rainbow nation, as a way to progress past nineteenth- and twentieth-century racialized nationalisms.

The self-conscious orientation to the concept of entanglement is less about issues of access—although the central desires of modernity undergird its socially meaningful context—and more about human sociality and affiliation. A recognition of entanglement serves as a ground for renegotiation of the social relations of apartheid South Africa because it constructs differences not as a hierarchical system but rather as a performative system of power dynamics that can be used to construct and express "the highest form of organized activity"[35]—the making of community, the constitution of human connection and affiliation (Kohn qtd. in Barber 3). One of the key figures of entanglement in the story—a soccer game—highlights embodiment, play, and performance. Mahala's use of entanglement serves to outline an embodied, performative, desiring self in the psycho-social act of community making—a concept of self that ultimately offers a counter vision to individualistic senses of self, which often ground modern practices of identification.

[35]Kohn defined this as "a sovereign state" (1965: 5).

As a condition of the psycho-social self, entanglement also serves as a meditation on the broader processes of belonging, affiliation, inclusion, and exclusion. After the soccer game, when the narrator's group of boys emerge from their rain shelters, the narrator sees a flock of swallows flying overhead and thinks,

> They all look black. I wonder if the swallows can distinguish their friends and relatives when they all look the same. If I were a swallow, I would hate to mistake someone like Bhongo for my relative. There must be good swallows and bad swallows. (Mahala 88)

The narrator's thoughts here foreground an anxiety about the ability to apprehend difference, specifically with a larger concern for conceptions of belonging and affiliation. The narrator worries that one might not recognize an encounter with difference or danger because of a sense of identification. This theme connects to a larger anxiety about color; its ambivalence as a signifier of difference, belonging, and affiliation; and perhaps its ultimate inadequacy as a way of classifying people represented in the child narrator's suspicion that swallows must use—or at the very least should use—a different indicator.

The child's seemingly simplistic view allows for a deeper reflection on color and practices of identification. Another example of the narrator grappling with the color caste system and its social meanings comes at the beginning of the story when the narrator notes,

> People kill the police. They make the police wear tyres like necklaces and set them alight. Sometimes they throw bottles filled with petrol and sand into police houses. Sometimes the *impimpis* are also burned to death by the people. The *impimpis* tell police where to find the people called terrorists. The people called terrorists kill other people, the *impimpis* say. The soldiers want to kill terrorists, too. I have seen soldiers, they are brown, and I have seen police too, they are blue, but I do not know the colour of the terrorists. (Mahala 80)

Perhaps entanglement significantly challenges us to develop processes of decolonization that grapple with decoupling the concepts of difference and color or allowing for a rearticulation of the social meanings of color. Needing to see difference is perhaps a basic, hardwired human mechanism that, as the narrator notes, may often mean the difference between life and death in a social context. In addition to this evolutionary framework, psychoanalytic models view the relationship between self and other as a primary, internal stage of human development. In his work *Internal Racism: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Race and Difference*, M. Fakhri Davids asserts three key relationships of self and other that support the concept of entanglement in the constitution of the self. The first other is the mother, who the infant is dependent upon for survival. From this primary relationship, the self is differentiated from others. The self is gendered through the second other—the Oedipal situation constituted through the father. Davids revises psychoanalytic theory to add the racial other as an internal construct and "a universal feature of the human mind" (12). Drawing on Fanon's work, Davids uses a psychoanalytic model not to posit essences but to situate the self within a historical context, which for Fanon explicitly related to the economic context, so that "in the colony—as in today's post-colonial world—dark skin confers an inescapable psychic problem: undesirable and unwanted mental content" that is always related to "the distribution of power" (Davids 108). While discerning difference may be a basic mechanism of the most primitive part of the human brain, the social meanings of color may be more ideological than naturalized. The confluence of decolonization and entanglement may sit in this uneasy articulation of discerning difference and challenging color as a key meaningful signifier of difference—consciously attending to the politics of

difference rather than attempting to transcend it. Mahala is able to keep issues of difference in play while also allowing us to think through how we figure out who we belong with and who is safe for us to belong to. Belonging, community-making, is risk. Perhaps, as Kierkegaard defines subjectivity itself, belonging is akin to a moral act, a kind of faith—always "the venture which chooses an objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite. . . . But the above definition . . . is an equivalent expression for faith. Without risk there is no faith" (qtd. in Davis xvii). Entanglement names the obvious fact of the connection of people who are located in close proximity to each other but also asserts the emotive connection, the desire for connection and the intimacy that exists even across entrenched (and perhaps basic human) mechanisms of exclusion and hegemonic systems of racialized separation, such as apartheid's ideology of separate development.

In *The Concept of Self: A Study of Black Identity and Self-Esteem*, Richard Allen quotes Chinweizu's comments on decolonization that "the African mind must be decolonized by overturning the authority that alien traditions exercise over the African" (28). A theory of decolonization cognizant of entanglement might revise this by using the constitutive nature of whiteness—rather than naming it an alien force—productively to suggest a dynamic and contingent process that keeps the idea of influence and desire in play; perhaps this "permanent tension" between the necessary discernment of difference (self and other, friend and enemy) and entanglement (the continuum of the human desire to beat in unison with others and the often violent histories of human contact) is where the contemporary saliency of double consciousness lies, where double stands in for the multiple and complex histories of contact (Allen 30).

In *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid*, Sarah Nuttall argues that notions of entanglement allow for "the deconstruction of a system of white superiority as a political and epistemological ground" (5) by focusing on the dynamic historical, spatial, and affective relationships between self and other. She goes on to explain that "the TRC gave rise to, and publicly brought into being, the relation of self to other as an ethical basis for the post-apartheid polity," bringing out the focus of the "self" or subjectivity "as an ethical project" and also the project of conceptualizing "a non-racial South African identity" (Nuttall 7, 8). Nuttall brings in the theory of Eduard Glissant to complicate the idea of basing practices of decolonization, identification, and belonging on a concept of African origins. Glissant writes:

> We must return to a point from which we started, not a return to the longing of origins, to some immutable state of Being, but a return to the point of entanglement, from which we were forcefully turned away; that is where we must ultimately put to work the forces of a creolization, or perish. (qtd. in Nuttall 9)

Entanglement allows for a focus on the complexity of encounters with the other and a concomitant focus on how these encounters are constitutive of the self. Nuttall explains the specificity of this concept for the South African context:

> Entanglement offers . . . a rubric in . . . which we can begin to meet the challenge of the 'after apartheid.' It is a means by which to draw into our analyses those sites in which what was once thought of as separate—identities, spaces, histories—come together or find points of intersection in unexpected ways. . . . It enables a complex temporality of past, present, and future; one which points away from a time of resistance towards a more ambivalent moment in which the time of potential, both latent and actively surfacing in South Africa, exists in complex tandem with new kinds of closures and opposition. (11)

Mahala's focus on colors—black, brown, blue, white, and the maroon cloth that allows the narrator to recognize it was Bhontsi who was necklaced—is one way to oppose the

symbolic economy of whiteness in favor of a dynamic rainbow of colors. This focus is ambivalent in that it suggests this new possibility as well as a deep anxiety about the proliferation of colors beyond black and white that can come to inscribe a metonymic turn in which people and affiliation are recognized, or perhaps more aptly misrecognized, through color.

Thus, entanglement also foregrounds the sense of the complex relationships, anxieties, and other forces that constitute the self within the world and therefore are pertinent to theories of decolonization. Entanglement, particularly as engaged in this story and the White Encounters section more broadly, moves away from notions of reconciliation. There is no way to reconcile the two emotional and figural poles of the story with each other: the soccer game and the necklacing of Bhontsi. The connection the boys experience during the soccer game suggests the potentialities enabled by desire and the need to redefine ideologies of self and other. But the narrator is not able to reconcile this experience with Bhontsi's death at the end of the story. Upon seeing the remains of Bhontsi's body, the narrator thinks, "The ashes are Bhontsi's body. The rhino skin has been reduced into ashes. But Bhontsi's toe did not get burned. . . . I don't want to look again" (Mahala 92). In this figural turn, the synecdochic figure for identity, Bhontsi's toe, remains not as synecdoche for the whole but the ravished/unwhole-whole itself. Bhontsi's toe becomes an irredeemable figure of misrecognition and the violence of simplification and stereotype. The affective and affiliative entanglement of the soccer game does not trump or reconcile Bhontsi's historical entanglement or his misidentification by the community. The death caused by Bhontsi's misrecognition reasserts the need for

redefinitions of self and other, friend and enemy, as constructed in the binary of freedom fighter/collaborator.

Entanglement and the Racial Stereotype: The Desiring Body in "Hunger"

Mahala's stories allow for a reflection on the centrality of modes of entanglement that constitute everyday experiences. "White Encounters" and "Bhontsi's Toe" show the complex experiences of and desire for intimacy. Such experiences undermine ideologies of separateness that ground apartheid's deployment of white supremacy. "Hunger" is set in post-apartheid South Africa. In "Hunger," the self constituted through Mahala's narrator is embodied, sexual, desiring, hungry—a body and mind seething with passions and unmet needs. The narrator, Sipho, suffers from hunger pangs brought on by the lack of food in his village, which is caused a drought. The physicality of the story foregrounds the subjugating quality of bodily needs and the emancipatory quality of pleasure. Hunger serves as a metaphor the entanglement of desire and subjectivity as represented through the primacy of the Fanonian desired/desiring body. The main points of identification for the narrator seem to be "body/race/ancestors" or physicality/color/culture (Bhabha 31). The narrator sets up the idea of a self constituted in community when he is discussing Xhosa culture with the school administrator, "If a cow dies, leaving a calf" Sipho states, "the calf becomes part of a herd, a community of cattle. It will never be alone. It is the case with our culture as well" (Mahala 100). Here, the principle of community is defined by shared ethnic heritage. In the story, hunger and sex are the key metonymic figures of entanglement. The sexual relationship between Kate, a graduate student from Denmark and the secretary of the Dean of Students at the University of Fort Hare, and Sipho, a student from Grahamstown who is trying to attain funding to continue at the university,

stages the connections and disconnections of sexual entanglement. The relationship between Sipho and Kate is defined by difference, Sipho being "the native" and Kate being positioned as a tourist or visitor. Sex, Sipho's affair with a white woman, is also the key white encounter staged in this piece.

The affective possibilities of enabling community across entrenched hierarchical meanings of color engage the more profound meaning of entanglement in the post-apartheid South African context. But the way in which Kate is first and foremost a white woman for Sipho and the way in which Sipho feels he is first and foremost "an anthropological subject" for Kate undermines these possibilities and points to the challenges to affiliation, intimacy, and community making in the broader post-apartheid context (Mahala 113). Sipho's relationship with Kate both decenters and affirms whiteness as hierarchical difference. The first time he hugs Kate, Sipho notes, "She gave me a hug, the first I got from a white woman. And it was just like any other hug" (Mahala 102). However, the meaning and imagery associated with the relationship with Kate is grounded in the social meanings and histories of hierarchical whiteness and white supremacy and superiority. Sipho notes during their first date when he serves as her tour guide,

> We went up as strangers, Kate and I, she riding on horseback and me walking besides the horse, like a slave. And we came down back as lovers. We walked hand in hand as we went down the mountain. . . . . Kate was not the most beautiful woman I had ever been with, but I was sure to earn respect among my fellow villages for "eating white bread." We were two years into a democratic South Africa, but no man in Mavuso village had been able to advance the idealism of a rainbow nation by having a white woman lift her dress for him. (Mahala 104–5)

While the connection is powerful, the intimate possibilities of entanglement do not overcome the economy of hierarchical difference. Sipho notes his hunger pangs,

described in the very first line of the story, are gone due to their connection, "Her touch was enough to banish all the hunger and tiredness" (Mahala 107). However, this power does not transcend the historical contingencies and context of their relationship but in fact overdetermines its social and personal meanings for the narrator. The exigencies of nation building in the new South Africa become a hindrance to intimacy and community building as seen in one of the funniest lines of the story: "Kate, the white woman was lying on her back, naked and ready for me. . . . I wanted to call all my ancestors to come and witness the work of democracy" (Mahala 108). The potentiality of a deep recognition of entanglement is stifled in the ways in which both function as racial stereotypes for the other.

Through the deployment of racial stereotypes, the characters constitute self and other through hierarchical notions of difference. In "The Other Question," Bhabha argues that stereotypes work within discourse to support or give access to psychic processes of subjectification and discursive processes of identification (18, 25). For Bhabha, "the stereotype" is "the primary point of subjectification in colonial discourse" (26). In his explication of Bhabha's argument about racial stereotype, Derek Hook relates the racial stereotype to "the paradox of otherness":

> The paradox in question operates at the levels of discourse and identification alike. As a mode of discourse the stereotype functions to exaggerate difference of the other, whilst nevertheless attempting to produce them as a stable, fully knowable object. As a mode of identification, the stereotype operates a series of mutually exclusive categories differentiating self and other which . . . contain anxiety, a wavering. (701)

Given these claims, analysis of the racial stereotypes deployed by the characters is a way to understand the self-making strategies employed within the world of the story and in

particular the ways in which the characters constitute difference. Sipho's relationship with Kate, always framed as a white encounter, suggests the entanglement of modes of self-making with modes of differentiation and affiliation. The ways racial stereotypes function in the story suggest the legacies of apartheid regimes of power: processes of subjectification that work through the deployment of hierarchical, racialized difference. Bhabha argues that "within the apparatus of colonial power, the discourses of sexuality and race relate in a process of *functional overdetermination*" (25). The sexual relationship between Kate and Sipho suggests that two years after the dawn of democracy, racial stereotypes continue to constitute "a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations" because "the stereotype impedes the circulation and articulation of the signifier of 'race' as anything other than its *fixity* as racism" (Bhabha 26). Bhabha argues that the stereotype is a lens through which the other is experienced and thus shapes "the language, perception, and form of the encounter" with the other (24). Specifically, the stereotype allows for "ideological and psychical identification" by casting the encounter in the unreal imaginary constructed through "dreams, images, fantasies, myths, obsessions and requirements" (Bhabha 27, 22). This domain of the unreal restricts radical forms of intimacy and entanglement because it constructs "a limited form of otherness . . . [—] a fixed form of difference" (Bhabha 28). The connection made in psychoanalytic, structuralist, poststructuralist, and postcolonial paradigms that the other is constitutive of the self emphasizes that this stereotypical fixing of the other is linked to reified, oppressive, limiting notions of the self because the other represents a site where self-constituting "affective and discursive energies converge," which include but are not limited to practices of affiliation and what

Bhabha calls "discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization" (Hook 703). Hook explains the significance of the other in the constitution of the subject, "The other as such . . . represents a concentration of anxiety and construction, a set of nervous investments in both knowledge and in the processes of identity" (703).

The images of physical entanglement related to the sexual relation between Sipho and Kate threatens to suggest an equivalent psychic entanglement that would make possible radical intimacy and identification. Mahala writes, "I held her in my arms and for awhile we were locked in a tight embrace" (107). Hook relates this potentiality to one of the poles of the paradox of otherness in which "we witness a situation in which the confrontation with radical difference threatens to give way to the possibility of identification, to the perception of similarity or a common humanity" (702). But each moment of possible identification quickly gives way to a privileging of distancing racialized difference. As Sipho is about to be with Kate in her dorm room, he narrates:

> I untied the towel and it fell on the ground. Her breasts were small and firm. She had pink nipples that looked straight at me. They were remarkably different to what I was used to. Nonzwakazi's breasts were brown and voluptuous. (107)

Before their first sexual encounter, Kate pulls Sipho into the bathroom to shower, where he sees another woman whose presence serves to mark Kate's racialized difference as a white rather than brown body:

> As we walked in, the shower door swung open, and a glittering brown body came out. . . . She had wide voluptuous hips, round bums and a flat stomach. Her structure was almost identical with Nonzwakazi's. . . . Her protruding backside gave me wild imaginations. My south pole pointed north instantly. (Mahala 108)

Sipho's narration of the encounter with Kate never seems to get past stereotypical modes of knowing that prioritize her racial difference.

The racial stereotype constructs a limited form of selfhood because of the impoverished relations it allows with others and therefore the restricted modes in which to constitute the self. This impoverishment also points to the forms of affiliation available in the post-apartheid setting of the story. The story illustrates a psychoanalytic framing of identification through images such as Sipho referring to his sexual encounter with Kate as a visit to "the Garden of Eden with my white Eve" (Mahala 107). In his dense explication of the function of stereotypes in colonial discourse, Bhabha ties the stereotype to processes of subjectification through Fanon's "primal scenes" or "myths of the origin of the marking of the subject within the racist practices and discourses of a colonial culture"—the birth of the self as racialized other (26). In Freud's psychoanalytic model, the scene is the space in "which desire is staged" (Hook 717). Moreover, the theatrical nomenclature of "the scene" ties desire and subjectification to performance and for Bhabha, "emphasizes the visible—the seen" and ties "the site of fantasy and desire . . . to . . . subjectification and power" (27). Bhabha explicates Fanon's primal scene of racialization:

> On one occasion a white girl fixes Fanon in a look and word as she turns to identify with her mother. It is a scene which echoes endlessly through his essay *The Fact of Blackness*: 'Look, a Negro . . . Mamma, *see* the Negro! I'm frightened. Frightened. Frightened'. 'What else could it be for me', Fanon concludes, 'but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood'. (26)

The use of the imagery of the Garden of Eden and Eve—the key Christian myth of the birth of the embodied, self-conscious, abject self—ties Sipho's white encounter to this

sense of originary myths. Sipho also feels that Kate sees him as simply a marker of the African and that for her the relationship is a voyeuristic walk on the exotic side. For the encounter to be complete, Sipho must meet Kate's expectations and requirements. Sipho feels Kate wants to better align him with her image of an African when she asks him if he's met Mandela because they both are Xhosa or when she asks him to change his hair. "I like the texture of your hair," she tells him then asks, "Why don't you get the locks" (Mahala 105). Sipho reads this request as casting the relationship within Bhabha's unreal scene marked by myth and stereotypical requirements as well as a form of Fanon's epidermalizing gaze, which is itself a form of alienating misrecognition.

Mahala builds on the theme of the gaze by having Kate continually record every experience in her journal, which brings in the sense of the voyeuristic nature of the relationship and again ties the relationship to the regimes of vision, watching, and seeing—"the scopic drive"—that theorist argue are an essential feature of whiteness (Bhabha 27). What Bhabha calls "the problematic of seeing/being seen" comes to a head at the end of the story when Sipho grabs Kate's journal and screams, "You fucking spy! What are you all about, exactly" (27, Mahala 113)? Sipho's frustration points the sense of misrecognition that infuses each piece in the White Encounter section. In each piece, the working of the racial stereotype fuels misrecognition and disrupts affiliation. Hook describes the work of the racial stereotype in creating an impoverished reality that disrupts radical intimacy:

> [T]he stereotype is a potent kind of reification, a concretising (or evidencing) of racist notions into actual people, situations, experiences, a means of making the truth. This, it seems, is a prime ideological operation, a 'making of one's truth' in the objects of the world, a continual reconfirmation of what one already 'knows' in the spiraling repetitions of the stereotype, which precisely attempt to actualize a certain ideological

> apparatus of ideas. Two crucial elements of ideological construction then: essentialization and reification, two means of protecting against . . . difference. (726–7)

The ultimate failure of the relationship created through the tension between the anxiety and difference produced by the working of the racial stereotype allows for reflection on "the bind of knowledge and fantasy, power and pleasure, that informs the particular regime of visibility" and modes of differentiation, affiliation, desire, and self-making deployed in "everyday scenes of subjectification" in the post-apartheid moment of the setting of the story (Bhabha 31).

At the story's dénouement, Kate tries to provide Sipho with evidence that might suggest a true sense of entanglement, "Tell you what, *brother*, this fucking spy listened to your troubles when no one cared, this fucking spy got you an appointment with the Registrar when it seemed impossible, this fucking spy fed you when you were hungry—" (Mahala 113). The story ends with Sipho "caught in a spider web"—a nice symbol of entanglement, yet he is also radically disconnected from Kate (Mahala 113). Again Mahala has not provided a moment of pure transcendence but a moment that opens a curtain to reveal the complex forces of entanglement at work. Sipho has gotten the university to pay his school fees. His grandmother, who has come to offer the Dean a chicken, announces, "They will let you study and give you food and accommodation. Hunger is gone" (Mahala 113)! And her words eerily match the words Sipho has seen written in Kate's notebook as a subheading in pages that prominently feature his name: "When Hunger Is Gone" (Mahala 113). The forces of entanglement work in tension with the ideological practices of difference and identification that constitute the racial stereotype, one not cancelling the other out because the old ways of identification still

influence Sipho's ability to see the complexity in his relationship with Kate. For Sipho it is still *only* stereotype; therefore, at the end of the story he is able to feel justified in dismissing all the misrepresentations and omissions he has used in his flirtations with Kate because he believes the relationship is somehow not genuinely intimate. He has access to his own inner feelings and believes Kate is operating in the same way, watching him, recording his behaviors as some kind of example of native behavior, but not connecting with him, not really seeing him. Sipho's motivations at the end of the piece lead to Hook's psychoanalytic explanation:

> We have something like a narcissistic schema of racism that exhibits a great deal of actual detachment between subject and other. . . . The . . . stereotyping process is sustained not by real actions or role of the 'other', but by the . . . ongoing need to defend against a threatening lack. This is a form of protection against difference—a continual foreclosure of the object of difference—rather than an actual engagement with the difference in question. There is hence a quality of the virtual about all such interactions with the racial other. . . . Bluntly put: there is, in reference to subject and their 'other' in [post]colonial contexts, a profound inability to think (and identify) outside of essentialist notions of race and culture. (729)

Here Hook describes the subject's disavowal of difference, which functions to compound difference—reverberate and extend "its effects, reifying absolute categories of the other, amplifying their otherness in a vicious circle of racism and difference—rather than enable a self-conscious relationship with entanglement (730). For Hook and Bhabha, this disavowal and inability to deeply engage with the racialized other points to the key intervention required to disrupt the functioning of the racial stereotype.

For Bhabha a key significance of the racial stereotype is that its ambivalence requires an analysis of "the *processes of subjectification* made possible and plausible through stereotypical discourse" (18, my emphasis). In line with the deployment of the

notion of entanglement, the working of the racial stereotype as a mode of identification suggests the need for the decolonization of practices of subjectivity in order to create new modes of affiliation, belonging, and orientation to the self and other that allow for deep connections across difference—or perhaps completely new conceptions of difference itself.

CONCLUSION
MODES OF WRITING THE POSTCOLONIAL SUBJECT

My goal in this work of literary criticism has been to engage in an analysis of representations of whiteness found in a selection of what I call *decolonizing literatures*—literary works that explicitly engage with confronting and challenging inherited subject positions in order to deconstruct colonial modes of subjectivity and posit new forms of postcolonial belonging. I examine Anglophone African literary representations of whiteness from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to query how *whiteness both enables and undermines* anticolonial consciousness. My examination of a selection of colonial, postcolonial, and post-apartheid works leads to my argument that whiteness influences postcolonial modes of "self-styling" (Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing" 242). By *whiteness*, I refer to a set of representational strategies related to self-craft and practices of identification—conflation and association being key moves in processes of self-styling. I further show how whiteness functions in each of these core moments and how critiques of whiteness can offer productive challenges to forms of subjectivity established in colonial modernity with the endgame in mind, elusive as it may seem: liberatory consciousness. By focusing on African literary works and whiteness as a discursive framework that informs performances of self and processes of identification, rather than biological or solely cultural concept, I aim to intervene in whiteness studies, which often focuses on representations of whiteness in the West as well as on whiteness as physical—as white bodies and white peoples. I focus on issues of whiteness and its representations and functions outside the West, particularly in relation to issues of belonging and modes of postcolonial identification. By *identification*, I refer to the representational and performative practices through which one situates oneself in

discourses related to self-styling and self-constitution—the aesthetic, personal, and political practices and performances through which one comes to know, present, and experience oneself for oneself as well as for others. Such performances include fashion, gestures, and language. Practices of identification also include the constellation of discourses, beliefs, ideological frames, and desires that operate on us and inform performances of self. The use of the term *identification* for the psychological concept of *identity* is meant to emphasize the contingent and provisional nature of the process of identification rather than the sense of identity as a fixed, coherent, unitary, or solid. Practices of identification are those practices we engage in to refute, construct, and deconstruct available subject positions.

A central question I examine is, How does whiteness as a symbolic manifestation function to constitute postcolonial African identification? Scholarship on the topic of subjectivity and liberation needs to thoroughly examine how whiteness intersects with key notions of modernity, such as race, class, progress, and self-determination. Through an examination of postcolonial African literary representations of whiteness, I aim to examine the aspirations, stereotypes, and fears that move us as readers and, more important, define us as human subjects. Ultimately, through this work, I grapple with the question of identification, understood as the system of desires, judgments, images, and performances that constitute our experiences of being human. I begin by looking backward at the satirical play, "The Blinkards," written in 1915 in the context of British colonization of the Gold Coast in West Africa (present-day Ghana), to develop an understanding of postcolonial identification that includes an examination of the artistic expression of a writer conceptualizing liberation as form of national identification. I go

on to examine a selection of postcolonial African literatures to present an understanding of how racialized socio-cultural realities constitute forms of selfhood in post-independence contexts.

I use my argument about representations of whiteness in African literatures to open up questions fundamental to contemporary theories of identification in postcolonial contexts, as well as to make a philosophical argument about the ethics of whiteness as it undergirds transnational modes of modernity. The main point I make in relation to postcolonial theories of subjectivity is that notions of identification are tied up in local, regional, and global circuits of capital and cultural production. In chapter 2, I look at an early novel (*A Grain of Wheat* 1967) and a more recent novel (*Wizard of the Crow* 2006) by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya), who locates African postcolonial subjectivity as deeply embedded in local traditions, myths, and storytelling circuits. By fluidly mixing the contexts of the local, the national, and the global, Ngũgĩ astutely challenges naturalized conventions that position black identities and blackness as always inferior to whiteness. Ngũgĩ represents postcolonial consciousness as a space whose local relationships are deeply informed by global structures of race, economics, and politics. Situating African postcolonial identification within global circuits of migration, capitalism, and colonialism, Ngũgĩ engages the pervasive significance of whiteness through representations of sickness and desire, suggesting that postcolonial identification is performed through beliefs and practices that are situated within a global racial hierarchy.

From there I go on to analyze a contemporary short story cycle by post-apartheid generation South African writer Siphiwo Mahala. Through his work, I continue to explore the issue of performative identification constituted through desire and

aspirational notions in which whiteness works as a moving signifier of cultural, economic, and social capital. The main question I address in this chapter is, What is the meaning of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa? Through this examination, I use my analysis of representations of whiteness to reflect on the politics of entanglement as a way to move beyond racialized and geographic modes of identification, to challenge conceptual boundaries that undergird modernity, and to posit the *theoretical possibilities of a politics of entanglement* in relation to broader issues of identification and belonging in postcolonial contexts.

I constantly look at these issues through the lens of decolonization and liberation. The concept of freedom is deeply entangled with practices of identification. The texts that I examine use whiteness in representing liberated African subjectivity. As such, I argue that whiteness is a basic category of modernity used to constitute the African self (Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing" 249). Through the course of my analysis I have shown how whiteness on a discursive level becomes intimately tied up with practices of resistance to colonialism and practices of liberatory identification and self-styling. Through the discursive modes of conflation and metonymic slippage, whiteness comes to stand in for the concept of liberation and becomes the preferred mode of constituting identity in modernity. In this way, postcolonial subjects see performances of whiteness—conceived of as using European forms of dress, leisure, and cuisine and the use of the English language, to name a few examples—as the way to challenge colonial domination, assert respectability and modernity, and participate in liberated rather than dominated modes of self. "The Blinkards" nicely emphasizes the relationship between whiteness, performance, and emergent practices of resistant (postcolonial) identification.

In the play, practices from a variety of European countries are conflated and referred to as "English". The visual characteristic of indigenous English people being white becomes the broad signifier of Englishness as whiteness. More important, the power, access, opportunity, and moral value assigned to imperial British practices within the hierarchical colonial relationship is itself seen as the power of whiteness. Imperial power is racialized; the signifier of that racial position becomes whiteness, and whiteness itself becomes the signifier for liberation figured as access and empowerment within a broader system of globalized capitalism, also referred to as colonial modernity.

I begin with this play set in the colonial period to relate postcoloniality to structures of resistant identification rather than to a temporal moment after decolonization. Sekyi's work presents the absurdity of basing emergent nationalist identification, as a mode of postcolonial identification, on whiteness. Sekyi's elite and aspiring elite characters are engaged in modes of self-styling in public and private spaces that ultimately emphasize whiteness. Through this move, on the one hand, Sekyi posits whiteness and Africanness as opposing and mutually exclusive modes of identification. In other words, Sekyi's cultural nationalist message advances "the idea of a unique African identity" that is grounded on the concept of and "membership in the black race" (Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing" 241). In his essay "African Modes of Self-Writing," postcolonial theorist Achille Mbembe teases out the implications of such racialized framings of African subjectivity, arguing that African subjectivity is conceived through three historical events, one of them being colonization. Mbembe argues that

> African criticism took up the question of selfcraft in terms of self-government and self-imaging [because] it inherited these three moments, but did not subject them to a coherent critique. On the contrary, subscribing to the program of emancipation and autonomy, it accepted, for

> the most part, the basic categories then used in Western discourse to account for universal history. ((Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing" 249)

The canonical meaning of this event is that the African self became alienated from itself through the experience of colonialism (241). However, the internal conflict of characters such as Mr. Borofosem suggests something else—not opposition but the conflicted and persistent homeliness of whiteness—the way that identification with whiteness is troubling for oppositional African subjectivity because of the way in which it feels like home. One reading of the character Mr. Borofosem is not how whiteness is a form of alienation but in fact a powerful form of belonging, emphasizing whiteness as a mode of liberatory identification. While on its face, Sekyi explicitly engages in a racialized politics of subjectivity that makes a bid for a pure form of Africanity through the exclusion of whiteness, his work, for example the internal struggles revealed in titles such as "The Anglo-Fanti," belie this exclusion at the most intimate levels of identification and self-craft and self-representation. Moreover, Mbembe also critiques equating African identification with "race and geography," which is the foundation of Sekyi's cultural nationalism as an emergent form of oppositional postcolonial identification ("African Modes of Self-Writing" 242). Mbembe writes,

> [F]or the first modern African thinkers, liberation from servitude was equivalent above all to acquiring formal power. The basic moral and philosophical question—that is, how to renegotiate a social bond corrupted by commercial relationships (the sale of human cargoes), the violence of endless wars, and the catastrophic consequences of the way in which power was exercised—was considered secondary. African criticism did not assume as its primary task a political and moral philosophical reflection on the nature of the internal discord that led to the slave trade and colonial domination. *Still less did it concern itself with the modalities of reinventing a being-together*. ("African Modes of Self-Writing 250, my emphasis).

Mbembe is critical of the way in which the African self comes to be constituted in the key tropes of modernity (race, nation, sovereignty) through the discourse of "emancipation and autonomy" rather than subjecting these categories to radical critique ("Modes of African Self-Writing" 252). Mbembe points to this issue as the problematic of African identification in modernity, again particularly through its constitution through the racialized nation. He defines the key issues of this problematic thusly:

> In dominant narratives of the self, the deployment of race is foundational, not only to difference in general, but also to the idea of the nation, since racial determinants are supposed to serve as the moral basis for political solidarity. . . . [R]acialization of the (black) nation and nationalization of the (black) race go hand in hand. Whether we look at negritude or the differing versions of Pan-Africanism, in these discourses the revolt is not against Africans belonging to a distinct race, but against the prejudice that assigns this race superior status. ("Modes of African Self-Writing" 254)

The category of race is grounded in an economy of hierarchical difference. Sekyi's cultural nationalist frame reifies racialist thinking and Enlightenment economies of difference. *Here is where the work of decolonization must continue*.

My analysis has also focused on a critique of race and nation as self-constituting tropes primarily based on the ambivalence of whiteness in Sekyi's work, the productive expansiveness of diasporic identification as compared to nationalist identification as presented in Ngũgĩ's novels, and the anxiety of color presented in Mahala's short story cycle. However, liberation is a concept I am not ready to jettison. Rather than seeing it as a key category of modernity, which it certainly is, I would connect it to much earlier sense-making frameworks of narrating human experience. Liberation as a framework for subjectivity emphasizes the pathetic (as related to pathos: the ability to arouse human emotions and passions), symbolic power of transformation in discourses related to the

human experience. The thematics of liberation positions subjectivity as that liminal experience of transcendence and becoming—as the upsurge of desire. I think that is powerful, beautiful, and touches upon a deep truth about the human desire to transform "consciousness as well as material conditions" (Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing" 250). Positing liberation as access to a hierarchal economy of being, positing liberation as nationalist war, positing liberation as whiteness is problematic (as I have attempted to lay out in my argument in the preceding chapters), speaks to the issue of the unfinished project of decolonization, and takes up Mbembe's critique of not subjecting the categories of colonial knowledge to a sufficient moral or philosophical critique.

The liberatory power of whiteness is intimately tied to the larger global capitalist economic system. In terms of identification, the desire for whiteness is associated with the economic benefits associated with class privilege within a hierarchical system. In fact, the discursive weight of whiteness is constituted in part through this conflation and synechdotal slippage of class power and racialized power with white skin. *Wizard of the Crow* nicely emphasizes the imbrications of issues of desire, global capitalism, and identification through the use of white-ache as a narrative device. The key desire of the governmental cabinet member Tarjirika to be white echoes Sekyi's focus on the relationship between whiteness and the specific modes of postcolonial identification of the indigenous elite and aspiring elite—those who were positioned as middle men who managed the liminal space within and between indigenous and colonial structures. As a figure that suggests how whiteness constitutes modes of postcolonial identification, white-ache emphasizes the pain of grounding oppositional identification in a hierarchical structure. More important, this ache, this sense of yearning and desire that haunts Sekyi's

play and is more explicitly engaged in Ngũgĩ's figure of white-ache, engages the sense of the multiplicity of identifications that constitute authentic postcolonial African subjectivity. In this way, Ngũgĩ's novel engages issues of subjectivity and identification in a more expansive manner than is available through Sekyi's cultural nationalism. Ngũgĩ's narrative explicitly works with issues of diaspora in one of the protagonists' transformative experiences as a crow that flies around the globe in search of the source of black power. Ngũgĩ's ultimately bases authentic African subjectivity in the expanded thematic of the African diaspora and gender complementarity, opening up the notion of identification to issues of entanglement with others across lines of nation and gender—challenging conventional geographical and social frames of belonging. Ngũgĩ's feminist invocation of gender complementarity, which requires two individuals to come together across gender lines to enable an authentic liberatory subjective experience, does challenge the metaphysics of difference and take up the thematic of entanglement. By bringing together the issues of diaspora, transformation, identification, and subjectivity, Ngũgĩ undoes the nationalist paradigm of the African spatial body and African geographical spaces as the ground self-constitution and identification. However, in positing black power as a mode of authentic and liberatory identification, Ngũgĩ's novel does not explicitly challenge racialized notions of identification. In addition, Ngũgĩ's engagement with gender complementarity can be read as inscribing a heterosexist ethos. Both of these readings, postcolonial African subjectivity as a mode of black power and gender complementarity, can be read to both challenge and support the metaphysics of difference.

Entanglement and the Metaphysics of Difference

> The self is made at the point of encounter with an Other. There is no self that is limited to itself. The Other is our origin by definition.
> --Achille Mbembe, "Achille Mbembe on the State of South African Political Life"

Theorists such as Simon Gikandi, Paul Gilroy, and Achille Mbembe write about how modernity is founded upon the metaphysics of difference. Mbembe argues that Enlightenment thinking is grounded in the idea of African difference—the idea that the African is outside the category of rational subjectivity. Mbembe refers to this discourse as the metaphysics of difference. Racialized identification is born out of this economy of alterity, which is based in hierarchical difference. Mbembe argues that "the most fully realized institutional form of this economy of alterity was the system of apartheid, in which the hierarchies were biological in nature" ("African Modes of Self-Writing" 247). As a way to challenge notions of absolute difference that ground Western discourse, literary theorist Sarah Nuttall developed the notion of entanglement in her readings of South African literary works. In relation to identification, the thematic of entanglement leads to critiques of framing subjectivity around racial and even geographical modes of belonging, suggesting an expansive identification that posits radical otherness as constituting the self—positioning authentic identification as a trans-subjective practice. In this way, the notion of radical entanglement has the ability to challenge conceptions of autonomy that undergird notions of the authentic self in colonial modernity, speaking directly to Mbembe's critique.

An examination of Mahala's short story cycle serves to bring out the key issues presented by Sekyi and Ngũgĩ: whiteness as a mode of desire through which the postcolonial African self constitutes itself that serves to emphasize a radical moral and social politics of entanglement rather than a self constituted through opposition or

hierarchical positioning of self and other. I argue that the thematics of entanglement challenges the metaphysics of difference, which grounds racialized modes of identification. Mahala's work also allows for an examination of how the inheritances of apartheid undermine the liberatory effects of notions of radical entanglement. I count whiteness as a central inheritance. In line with Mbembe's analysis, I argue that not subjecting the ethics of whiteness as a mode of self-styling and identification to a coherent critique undermines aspirations for liberatory consciousness. During the period of cultural nationalism and emergent nationalist identification, represented here through Sekyi' work, whiteness becomes the key discursive mode used to represent the autonomous, sovereign, modern African self. Whiteness becomes a way to belong to rather than challenge dominant hierarchical modes of self-constitution, such as race and nation. The notion of liberation as entanglement may allow for a productive challenge to grounding identification in the metaphysics of difference. As such, the thematics of entanglement challenges Enlightenment modes of constituting the self through opposition to the other, an eviscerated form of otherness, in order to embrace radical, full, messy otherness as the ground and condition of the self.

#blacklivesmatter and the Problem of Alterity

My reading of a range of decolonizing African texts serves as an intervention into Enlightenment modes of self-craft and the hierarchical construction of self and other. I began with the question, How do African literatures define liberation? and end with the question, How do African literatures define the problematic of the self? by looking at postcolonial African writers as offering a peculiar purchase on the entanglement of intimate relationship and radical alterity within Anglophone discourses of modernity. My

intervention is to pose the question, How can practices of postcolonial identification—liberatory consciousness—be developed outside of racialized paradigms? I ask these questions as a person whose identification is firmly grounded in racialized forms of subjectivity—in being a blackgirl. I don't know how to think any other way than through racialized forms of identification. I only pose the final question with the deconstructionist impulse to continue to query the ground of the reality through which I constitute myself. And the texts I examine help me do just that—through absurdity, laughter, anxiety, and aching desire. Mbembe reminds us "of all the attempts that have been made through the course of the twentieth century to break with this empty dream, this exhausted mode of thought" ("African Modes of Self-Writing" 257). I am not sure if it is exhausted. In a move mirroring Gikandi's imperative to ask postcolonial discourse to look at the true desires of postcolonial subjects, Ngũgĩ's device of white-ache asks us to look at the real desire to be white, which poses something messier than simply being able to dismiss race as an exhausted paradigm. Its perverse persistence (an intimate desire for belonging?) suggests something else, perhaps something wholly more interesting (and terrifying?) about social relationship and the emancipatory possibilities of being together.

The contemporary social movement #blacklivesmatter takes up many of the theoretical issues posed here and in the literary texts I have examined, explicitly focusing on the myth of the benefits of the nation state, radical love for the black self, and dismantling white supremacist systems of building wealth. In other words, I would argue, is doing the work of creating more liberatory ways of being in the world by asking us to think about what it means to be human. Given the frame of black lives, an underlying question for this movement becomes how can we be together within a system in which

identification is racialized—locating the concerns of these literary texts in the real world through the effort to create a movement that confronts the specific local iterations of urgent contemporary global issues, such as violence against black bodies. During a #blacklivesmatter panel at the private college I currently teach at, a young black female student asked why we (black people) should be concerned about what white people think. Why should we try to engage white people at all? She spoke elegantly and asked if we were committing the same sins as all previous civil rights movements by trying to communicate the oppressive truths about specific local black experiences to white audiences. "We don't need anything from them," she said.

Her pain, her anger, her resolve is why I do this work of thinking through the implications of entanglement, practices of contemporary identification, and postcolonial modes of being together. For me, the key question then becomes is her stance—black nationalism, black separatism, apartness—liberatory? Her pain comes the primal Fanonian moment—looking at ourselves through the white gaze is clearly painfully self-negating even as it becomes a workable ground upon which to found subjectivity in a white supremacist system. It works. We learn to look at ourselves through the norm, but is it liberatory? If so, who does it free? Representational strategies—ways of understanding and being ourselves in the world—that affirm black humanity essentially through establishing its distance from whiteness—either by decreasing that distance to show correspondence or by increasing that distance to show opposition are grounded in hierarchical economies of alterity.

Mbembe points out on a theoretical level the problem "of any project aimed at disentangling Africa from the West" ("Modes of African Self-Writing" 257), and the

urgency of that theory crystallized when I heard this young woman speak about how to enact her vision of liberatory consciousness. We have already tried the walls. They have failed. I do not speak about a facile mode of entanglement. Analysis of postcolonial African literatures leads to an understanding of what Steve Garner calls "the asymmetrical choices and relationships"—the power relations—that undergird processes of identification ("Whiteness: An Introduction" 9). The salience of racial identification—the powerful call for the *I* to be a *we*—is perhaps an essential collective experience. As Richard Dyer argues in *White*, racial representation is central to the organization of the contemporary world. If the concept is productive is there a way to transform the epistemic domination of race as a hierarchical concept? Is there a way create modes of identification that honor our multiple inheritances, allow us to be together ethically, and also critically attend to modes of privilege and asymmetrical systems of power? The self as a relational concept that exists within specific locations and is structured through wider systems of oppression may not (should not?) go away. I argue that the thematics of entanglement as a mode of identification does not jettison this relational sense of self—it recognizes this in ways that challenge racial (and national) identification. And so for me, this young women's query, the exigencies of our contemporary moment, ask me to go further. How can we look at racialized identification not as false consciousness but as a desire that has been mythologized and misnamed and therefore perhaps remains unexamined, not allowing for self-reflexive examination. I believe that examining how whiteness undergirds representations of self and the practice of postcolonial self-craft may allow for more nuanced conceptions of self that intimately take up the position of

the other, not in opposition nor necessarily in complete symmetry, but nonetheless in the very constitutive depths of the experience of the self.

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