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This article examines the reproduction of colorblindness discourse in selected post-1994 South African studies in economics, education, literature, philosophy, and sociology. It argues that the presence of dominant racial ideologies in this scholarship is emblematic of an active investment in maintaining racialized privileges. As it illustrates some of the rhetorical mechanisms that inform the articulation of colorblindness discourse at large, it shows that unpacking colorblind rhetoric is itself necessary if we are to make sense of the research emphases, arguments, logics, and findings of a significant body of South African scholarship on race published since the advent of democratic rule.

Keywords: Post-Apartheid South Africa; Colorblindness; Nonracialism; Racial Discourse; Whiteness

Testifying to the ongoing *killability* of the Black person in post-apartheid South Africa, in August 2012 police opened fire on a group of striking workers who were demanding living wages, killing 34 and injuring at least 78.[1] The event at the Lonmin platinum mine in Marikana starkly resembled the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, which also occurred in Gauteng after a protest that challenged the status quo, and speaks to striking continuities between the apartheid past and the democratic present. That the police force carrying out the executions today is multiracial rather than predominantly white does not make this incident disconnected from institutional racism, but it does give ammunition to colorblind arguments that deny the central role that racial power played in the tragedy and the demonstrations preceding it.[2]

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Twenty years after the official end of apartheid, racial inequality remains rampant in South Africa. White people, less than 10 percent of the population, own approximately 85 percent of the land, 85 percent of the entire economy, and over 90 percent of the largest companies.[3] Undeniably, whites "still act as gatekeepers for the majority group who are in power politically but certainly not economically" (Steyn in Grant, 2007, p. 94). The differential life expectancy of less than 50 years for Blacks and over 70 years for whites also speaks to a ghastly politics that does not value Black life. Yet, despite these noticeable realities, as Tukufu Zuberi and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2008) show, not unlike in the United States, the "declining significance of race" myth also permeates South African sociology.

A significant body of scholarship on race produced in post-apartheid South Africa demonizes the employment of racial categories, underemphasizes or silences white advantage, and vilifies policies that attempt to redress racial inequality. It is crucial that we give close attention to these studies because, as Howard Winant (2001) explains, "The rearticulation of (in)equality in an ostensibly colorblind framework emphasizing individualism and meritocracy, it turns out, preserves the legacy of racial hierarchy far more effectively than its explicit defense" (p. 35). Of course, this is not only relevant in the South African context. Colorblindness is a transnational discourse deployed also in Europe and in other former European settler colonies—from Australia to Brazil and from Cuba to the United States, places in which racial inequality remains pervasive.

In South Africa, during the anti-apartheid struggle, the nonracialism promoted by the African National Congress (ANC) represented a practical antiracist strategy aimed at fostering unity across racial lines while still privileging the interests of Black people (see Motlanthe & Jordan, 2010). However, as Achille Mbembe (2014) writes, "Reactionary and conservative forces have co-opted nonracialism, which they now equate with colour-blindness. They use nonracialism as a weapon to discredit any attempt to deracialise property, institutions, and structures inherited from an odious past" (n.p.). Although nonracialism is rooted in a history of decolonial resistance, today it represents a regressive tool that supports white privilege. The terms "nonracialism," mainly used in the South African context, and "colorblindness," used more frequently in the United States, have become de facto interchangeable.

This study identifies the discursive presence of colorblind ideology in selected post-1994 South African studies on race in economics, education, literature, philosophy, and sociology. In the process, it makes visible some of the rhetorical mechanisms that inform the repertoire of colorblindness at large and shows that the discourse permeates both social sciences and humanities. Precisely because colorblind strategies traverse disciplinary and even national boundaries, it would be impossible to proceed analytically by ascribing each one to a specific discipline, topic, or scholar. In fact, I aim to illustrate precisely the malleability of colorblind rhetoric. Understanding the rhetorics of colorblindness is itself necessary if we are to make sense of the research emphases, arguments, logics, and findings of a considerable body of South African scholarship on race produced in the last two decades.

I interrogate South African scholarship in light of the interdisciplinary tools provided by critical race studies and the works of Black radical thinkers. So far, most research on colorblindness has focused on U.S. cases (Ansell, 2006, p. 335). Given the transnational dimensions of colorblindness, some U.S. scholarship provides a useful lens for understanding the discourse elsewhere. Still, it is necessary to remain attentive to national particularities. The primary methodology I employ for unpacking colorblind rhetoric is *close reading*. In doing so, I build upon Critical Race Theory, which has long established the desirability of using literary methods to interpret legal texts (see Lawrence, 1995, p. 347). Scholars in other fields have also recognized the importance of "looking at whiteness as critical readers" (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010, p. 86). While this study is grounded in an extensive engagement with post-apartheid scholarship on race, performing close rather than distant readings requires privileging depth over breadth and therefore presenting only a limited number of studies.

The studies examined herein have three fundamental things in common: (a) they advance arguments about racial relations, racial inequality and/or racial discourse in post-apartheid South Africa, (b) their interventions are *not* obviously racist but are framed as antiracist or concerned with racial justice, and (c) they are often widely cited and written by scholars who are influential voices in their fields. However, I do not intend to generalize and suggest that most South African academics who work on racism are committed to the same agenda, for this is certainly not the case. Instead, I hope to call attention to the urgent reality of racial domination, a reality that is too often mystified in academia. While I contend that works in the specific disciplines I examine—in particular sociology and education—have become central venues for the reproduction of colorblind doctrines in South African universities, I acknowledge that no field is immune to the phenomenon and hope that this study will pave the way for analyses that tackle colorblind logics within alternative studies and disciplines.[4]

Recognizing that the production of knowledge is a key site for the protection of racial power across national boundaries, this article thus turns the lens to academic scholarship itself. In doing so, it is indebted and contributes to a substantial body of interdisciplinary scholarship (for example, Conway, 2008b; Lipsitz, 2006; Mills, 1997; Morrison, 1992; Shome & Hedge, 2002; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008) that shows how whiteness "is built into our disciplines, our institutions, our professions … and in our methods as researchers" (Steyn & Conway, 2010, p. 286). Originally monopolized by the United States (Steyn & Conway, 2010, p. 285), whiteness studies have gained traction in the South African context (see Steyn & Conway 2010; West & Schmidt, 2010). For example, significant studies on white identity (Distiller & Steyn, 2004; Drzewiecka & Steyn, 2012; Steyn, 1998, 2001, 2005), white advantage (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010; Steyn, 2007), or antiracist whiteness (Conway, 2008a; Matthews, 2012) show that the field is wide-ranging and growing.

This study has benefited in particular from Melissa Steyn's work on "White Talk" (Steyn, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2010), which Steyn and Foster (2008) define as a set of discursive practices that "attempt to manage the positionality of white South Africans to their (perceived) greatest competitive advantage, within an Africanizing context"

(p. 26). The authors contend that, although not all white people resort to "White Talk," its repertoire is nevertheless characteristic of white South African discursive approaches to race (p. 26). There is much overlap between "White Talk" and "colorblind talk" (Kim, 2000, p. 17). Although I am interested primarily in texts rather than authors, it seems relevant to disclose that most of the works examined in this study are written by white scholars and that I myself am one. Only a few studies examined herein are authored by scholars of color. Mentioning this is not an attempt to "share the blame" (Steyn & Foster, 2008, p. 32) and deflect attention from white people's primary responsibility for the perpetuation of racial inequality. It means noticing that, for example, in South Africa and beyond, a commitment to colorblindness can signify a larger chance to succeed in white-dominated academia, which tends to reward scholars who embrace colorblind doctrines (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008, p. 281). It also implies recognizing that everyone, especially people in positions of power, can have an interest in maintaining the status quo.

In contesting the idea that any emancipatory vision for a New South Africa can be undertaken without speaking of race and making racial inequality visible, I acknowledge that, as Toni Morrison (1992) writes, "The world does not become raceless or will not become unracialized by assertion. The act of enforcing racelessness … is itself a racial act" (p. 46). Beyond raising uncomfortable questions about the meaning of justice in the post-apartheid present, the location of colorblindness ideology in South African scholarship reveals the impact of racial consciousness onto the production of racialized meaning. Established theories of racial epistemology argue that white ways of knowing, and privileged positionalities in general, are primarily defined by *ignorance* (see Mills, 1997, 2007; Steyn, 2012), as exemplified by the statement "lack of insight into its own privilege … is the trademark of privilege" (Steyn & Foster, 2008, p. 30). Yet, racialized knowledge, agency, and intentionality are central to the reproduction of colorblindness discourse in South Africa and beyond. I argue that the presence of colorblind rhetoric in the studies analyzed herein is neither the product of ignorance nor coincidence, but is indicative of what George Lipsitz (2006) calls a *possessive investment in whiteness*; that is, an active interest in reinscribing white privilege. In the pages that follow, I aim to show that the investment in silencing race within scholarship *about* race, particularly racial inequality, is a paradox of great significance.

Reading Racial Power

In October 2010, a number of leading South African scholars gathered at Wits University for a colloquium titled Revisiting Apartheid's Race Categories, which was inspired by a debate about admission criteria and affirmative action that had taken place at the University of Cape Town in 2007 (Erasmus, 2012, p. 1). Co-hosted by the School of Human and Community Development, the Transformation Office, the Faculty of Humanities at Wits University, and the Centre for Critical Research on Race and Identity at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the colloquium featured many papers that critiqued the employment of racial categories. Ongoing academic efforts to revise and silence apartheid categories beg the question that Harry Garuba (2012)

posed in the closing remarks of the colloquium: "What are the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a particular problematic concerned with bureaucratic and administrative classification and not another, say, one concerned with the material and discursive production of race?" (p. 174). While more empirical research on institutional racism is sorely needed, numerous South African studies focus on racial categories per se. This emphasis is not accidental.

The institutionalization of colorblindness in South African academia becomes evident if we consider that the theoretical deconstruction of racial categories frequently goes hand in hand with the explicit demonization of race-based affirmative action policies. Several studies brand measures which are meant to *redress* racial inequality as "new policies of racial discrimination" (Seekings, 2007, p. 1) or as "pro-African racial discrimination" (Seekings, 2007, p. 26), while the racial categories needed to implement these policies are vilified as having "negative effects" (Ruggunan & Maré, 2012, p. 56), causing "separation" (Maré, 2003, p. 23) or "entrenching racial prejudice" (Alexander, 2007, p. 94). Jonathan Jansen (2009a) goes as far as attacking affirmative action as follows: "Black nationalists are doing after apartheid exactly what Afrikaner nationalists did under apartheid: promoting people on the crude basis of colour, this time to meet employment equity pressures and through a misguided sense of parity with white academics" (p. 149).[5] This statement compares white supremacist policies with measures intended to compensate for them. It also suggests that white academics are somehow superior to Black scholars. In a noteworthy body of South African scholarship on race—especially scholarship produced in disciplines with a direct impact on public policy such as sociology and education—racial categories themselves, and not institutional racism, are routinely endowed with the power of maintaining apartheid logics, reproducing colonial violence, and creating racial conflict.

A conspicuous number of South African sociological studies about race ironically argue that race should no longer be the object of discussion. The scholarship of Gerhard Maré (2003) is a case in point. In "Non-Racialism in the Struggle against Apartheid," the sociologist argues that in order to "come to grips" (p. 13) with the racist past, South Africans should now stop thinking racially. Maré argues that "*the very notion of 'race' must be deliberately undermined*" (p. 14—italics in the text). However, how does "not thinking racially" contribute to dismantling institutionalized racism? If race is automatically suspended as a category of analysis, how do we confront racial inequality? The article in actuality does not propose any remedy to racial inequality. Maré argues that racism "continues to draw on the banal perpetuation of notions of race in everyday life, as well as in political practice in a democratic South Africa" (p. 13). Since "[r]ace still exists because racism persists" (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 21) and not vice versa, Maré here reverses cause and consequence. The depiction of racism in Maré's statement is in agreement with what Neil Gotanda (1995) defines as *formal-race unconnectedness*; that is, racism viewed merely as "individual prejudice" (p. 257). Such an individualized conceptualization, Gotanda explains, excludes "an understanding of the fact that race has institutional and structural dimensions" (p. 265).

Another key rhetorical strategy that Maré's article employs is *aggregation*. The scholar writes: "we have continued with *an acceptance that there are races* … and then the discussion is really just about the relevance of race: should this determine citizenship, land ownership, cultural funding, census categories, etc; does it apply to intelligence, physical ability, cultural traits …?" (p. 29; italics in the text). Here, Maré conflates issues that are vital for the achievement of racial equality ("citizenship, land ownership") with biological-deterministic notions of race that are obviously fallacious ("intelligence, physical ability") in order to discredit the category 'race' per se, a move commonly employed in colorblind talk. In the meantime, the scholar does not mention how racism continues to define everyday life for most Black South Africans.

As Maré argues that racial categories are divisive, an action that further stigmatizes their employment in affirmative action policies, he also relies on a de-politicizing appeal to a "shared humanity" that precludes any critique of white privilege (see Steyn & Foster, 2008, p. 32). Separation, he writes, "can make people forget their shared humanity, with suspicion then generating racism" (p. 23). Referring to a common humanity allows Maré to obscure racialized particularity. Although it appears to express concern for collectivity, the discourse of liberal humanism that Maré reproduces is entwined with a liberal ideology that "purportedly judges individuals on the basis of their own individual actions" (Bauman & Briggs, 2003, p. 59). The appeal to liberal humanism as a means to silence racial inequality also transcends disciplinary boundaries. For example, literary scholar Rosemarie Jolly (1995) insists on "the resurrection of the scholar's 'I'" and the "reference to the self" (p. 25) as conditions that enable the intellectual to speak about the Other. Claiming a neutral subjectivity, Jolly assumes that a "reference to the self" can occur without interrogating and historicizing its positionality.

An especially powerful strategy for silencing racial grievances across disciplines, the evocation of liberal humanism is facilitated by the appropriation of antiracist thought in general and the co-optation of Edward Said's work in particular. For instance, citing Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, education scholar Crain Soudien (2012b) argues that Said called for a historiography that was attentive to "human experience in all its diversity and particularity" (p. 35). While Soudien considers this positive, the abstract valorization of human diversity is here accompanied by efforts to silence the concrete reality of racialized particularity. Comparably, in "Confronting the Categories: Equitable Admissions Without Apartheid Race Classification," sociologist Zimitri Erasmus attacks affirmative action by opening with an epigraphic citation from Said's *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. Paradoxically, as they appeal to humanity itself, these studies fail to recognize Black humanity as in need of redress.

It is not a claim to universal subjectivity—the belief that 'we are all just people'—that will make racism disappear. Racism is not produced by suspicion, as Maré (2003) contends, neither is it a pathology that can be cured through behavior modification, as philosopher Samantha Vice (2010) suggests. The dismantling of racial regimes requires concrete institutional actions, not arguments about the commonness of humanity that disregard collective advantages. Andile Mngxitama (2009) explains

that liberal humanism is deliberately invoked to concurrently mystify and reinforce white dominance:

> Whiteness [in South Africa] is so pervasive it has become invisible, that is to say normalized—the "normative state of existence." This normative state of existence is also a powerful tool of silencing. "Why can't we all just get along?" someone asks innocently, while another claims that "colour is just skin deep, in fact we are human beings ultimately." Blacks are under pressure to accept this, and therefore fail to bracket off whiteness. … The arsenal of strategies which function to normalize and make invisible whiteness (with all its unearned privileges), generally falter when whiteness is exposed, because to point out that whites are white is to call for accounting. (p. 16)

Far from encouraging accountability, much post-apartheid scholarship minimizes or completely disavows white privilege. For instance, Jolly (1995) contends that white South African academics enjoy a position of "relative privilege" (p. 24) while philosopher David Benatar (2011) mystifies racial advantage by resorting to the discursive minoritization of white people. White South Africans, who are "a minority of the population," Benatar argues, "are hardly capable of *managing* and *shaping*" the political landscape (n.p.—emphasis in the text). According to the philosopher, during apartheid only "some 'whites' were benefited from discrimination against 'blacks.'" The irony of affirming that whites "are better off now that apartheid has ended" to demonstrate that white people did not benefit from apartheid must have escaped Benatar. For these arguments to be effective, any reference to economics must be elided.

In *Class, Race, and Inequality in South Africa*, one of the most influential book-length studies on inequality in post-1994 South Africa, Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass (2005) also rewrite apartheid history, a technique frequently deployed in "White Talk" (Steyn, 2010). The study, which in over four hundred pages examines changes in economic inequality from the beginning of apartheid until the present, argues:

> that the distributional regime in South Africa has long served to privilege one section of the population while excluding others, but the composition of the privileged group and the basis of privilege has changed over time. Initially, under apartheid, insiders and outsiders were defined primarily in racial terms. … But the very success of [the apartheid distributional regime] in advantaging white people allowed the basis of exclusion to shift from race to class: white South Africans acquired the advantages of class that allowed them to sustain privilege in the market and cease to be dependent on continued racial discrimination. (p. 6)

As the passage illustrates, merely six pages into the volume, the study detaches white privilege from ongoing exploitation. It treats white privilege as residual, as produced in a racialized past with no bearing on the present, and ironically contends that *apartheid itself* enabled its alleged demise. The authors separate white economic advantage from its causal connection to racial domination, obfuscate the intersectional relationship between race and class, and silence racial power in the present.

Seekings and Nattrass's study also detracts attention from the reality of white economic power by focusing on income gap and class differences *among* Black South Africans. In the attempt to demonstrate "the steadily declining importance of interracial inequality and rising importance of intraracial inequality" (p. 308), the scholars write that "by 2000, there were about as many African people as white people in the top income quintile" (p. 45). However, we could use the same statistics to prove exactly the opposite. A very simple fact is mystified in the text: Whites are less than 10 percent, and not 50 percent, of the South African population. This inclusion of statistics, and the analysis thereof, reveals the employment of what Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva (2008) call *white methods*, defined as "the practical tools used to manufacture empirical data and analysis to support the racial stratification of society" (p. 18). According to Seekings and Nattrass, the fact that white people occupy approximately 50 percent of the top earning quintile does not demonstrate that racial inequality remains rampant, but shows that class alone constitutes an adequate indicator of inequality.

Yet, if class can autonomously explain inequality in post-apartheid South Africa, as the authors argue, then why direct the reader's attention to racialized phenomena such as intraracial inequality? Seekings and Nattrass's study exhibits contradictions inherent in scholarship that enforces colorblindness while producing knowledge about racial inequality. The book does not provide detailed data about the racial composition of the poorer classes, nor does it examine the significance of the striking difference in life expectancy for Black and white people. Rather than speaking to a "shift from race to class" (p. 6), these realities demonstrate that the South African class structure remains deeply racialized and that institutional racism impacts not only economic distribution, but also people's very chance to reach adulthood.

Seekings's (2007) *Race, Discrimination, and Diversity in South Africa* also manipulates apartheid history. The study argues that the apartheid system required racial classification to maintain its three main objectives, which Seekings considers to be: first, ideological (maintaining 'racial purity'); second, economic (protecting the economic privileges of whites); and third, political (maintaining the political dominance of whites; pp. 3–4). The text here denies the primacy of economics in explaining apartheid categorization and instead provides a "revisionist history" that literally "whitewashes apartheid" (Steyn, 2010, p. 542). Although Seekings admits that the 1950 Group Areas Act "led to the forced removal of almost one million people," spatial segregation is represented primarily as a way to preclude inter-racial mixing by preventing "temptation" (p. 3). Seekings represents racist ideologies as independent from, and more important than, the economic structures they sustain. This strategy portrays segregation mainly as the consequence of white people's misguided ideas and fears about miscegenation, rather than the deliberate attempt to manage difference so as to make white economic dominance and Black poverty permanent.

Seekings's study goes as far as depicting whites as the new victims of racism while announcing the end of anti-Black racism in South Africa, writing:

> Racial discrimination in economic life against black people has been largely ended in South Africa. Some lingering discrimination by white employers against black people no doubt persist, but it is probably more than offset by the effects of affirmative action. Persistent racial inequalities reflect class stratification rather than racial discrimination. (p. 1)

Seekings concedes that, in compensating for discrimination in the labor market, affirmative action has had a positive effect. Still, the "probably" indicates conjecture and a reluctance to provide empirical evidence. Racism is here also individualized and represented as the personal prejudice of certain employers. The institutional racism that enables these "white employers" to be a racialized group in a collective position of power is not addressed. As Steyn affirms, "top positions in the country remain very much in the hands of White males, who have actually increased their stake at the top in corporate South Africa in recent years" (in Grant, 2007, p. 94). While Black people are 87 percent of the economically active population, as Khaya Dlanga (2010) shows, 91 percent of South African chief executives are white. Facts such as these, which challenge Seekings's contentions, are omitted in the study.

In colorblind talk, individualization is deployed to obfuscate the causes of white advantage and to portray Black disadvantage as unrelated to racism. For example, Seekings affirms that many Black workers in South Africa are unemployable because of a long series of hindrances that begin during childhood. Black children, Seekings maintains, are raised in "home environments which are not conducive to educational success, and attend schools where the quality of education is very poor" (p. 25). In instantly locating the causes of Black poverty in the home, Seekings constructs a narrative that risks pathologizing the Black family. As Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva (2008) explain, "[a]nother way to minimize the effects of racial stratification is by portraying the effects of poverty as the causes of poverty; specifically, by focusing on the 'culture of the natives' as the problem" (p. 144). As Seekings's study intimates that deficiencies in the Black home could explain Black poverty, it fails to acknowledge poor schooling as the product of institutional racism.

Even as it announces the demise of racism, Seekings's study contends that empirical research on patterns of discrimination in the South African labor market has yet to be conducted. Rather than calling for such investigation, the scholar predicts that this research *would* find that "racial discrimination is practiced in favour of black applicants through affirmative action and BEE [Black Economic Empowerment] policies" (p. 24). Although Seekings states that "being white apparently continues to earn a premium in the labour market" (p. 24), he nevertheless represents white people as victims of discrimination. White South African children, Seekings asserts, are subjected to the "disadvantage of being white in an affirmative action environment" (p. 26). The unemployment rate in South Africa, as Dlanga (2014) shows, is only seven percent for whites and over 30 percent for Blacks. Still, Seekings blames affirmative action for allegedly foreclosing working opportunities for white people, arguing that whites are increasingly migrating "to avoid unemployment" (p. 25). Reproducing a "rhetoric of injured self-righteousness" (Steyn, 2010, p. 8), Seekings's work hence concludes by postulating a complete reversal in relations of

power: White people, who continue to own 85 percent of South Africa's wealth, are depicted as the new victims of racism.

Although much South African scholarship that enforces colorblindness is produced in the social sciences, the humanities are similarly susceptible to the seduction of hegemonic racial ideologies. Proving that any discipline offers both racist and antiracist tools, literary criticism, which provides important methods for the textual analysis of colorblind rhetoric, also features works that reproduce colorblind doctrines. Examining an important piece of early post-apartheid literary criticism shall probe this contention. In "Rehearsals of Liberation: Contemporary Postcolonial Discourse and the New South Africa," Rosemary Jolly (1995) argues that it is necessary to undertake "a critical evaluation of the terms used to phrase condemnations of racism" (p. 17) in post-apartheid South Africa. The literary scholar envisions this task as a "massive critique" (p. 17) that should occur in several intersecting domains, including the economic and political spheres, both at home and abroad. In an attempt to contribute to this critique, Jolly's article takes on postcolonial scholarship as it has been applied to the South African context. Examining primarily anti-apartheid theatre and Jacques Derrida's essay "Racism's Last Word," Jolly argues that the strategies some postcolonial critics employ to denounce South African racism are misguided and represent a "reactionary measure" (p. 17). As Derrida's essay depicts South Africa as a "spectacularly other" (p. 19) and retains Manichean oppositions, Jolly contends, its effects are "neo-colonial rather than counterdiscursive" (p. 20). Because Derrida names the colonizer and the colonized, Jolly considers Derrida's essay to be at odds with its intended goal of condemning racism.

Contesting the alleged failure of deconstructionism to deconstruct Western subject–object binarism, Jolly rejects any theoretical approach that "requires the maintenance of the binary colonizer/colonized as an essential racial opposition" (p. 22) in post-apartheid South Africa. Jolly states that upholding racial categories and racial identities represents a hindrance in the quest to "triumph over the history of apartheid" (p. 22). Yet, the ambiguity of Jolly's essay provokes several questions: What does it mean to "triumph over the history of apartheid"? Is this a purely rhetorical maneuver? Who are the primary beneficiaries of the "liberation" (p. 22) that Jolly envisions? And if all binary oppositions are to be removed, how can oppression be articulated and how is resistance possible? Can scholars speak of colonialism without speaking of colonizer and colonized?

Vilashini Cooppan (2000) challenges arguments such as those presented in Jolly's article and argues that postcolonial scholars need to continue theorizing race and nation. She writes:

> For many South African intellectuals and activists schooled in the ANC's non-racialist tradition, to speak of race now is tantamount to the retention and promulgation of old apartheid classificatory categories. Not to speak of race and ethnicity, however, is to risk elision of apartheid's legacies; it is to commit that very error which 'the post-colonial' is so frequently found guilty, namely the premature announcement of the end of a system of domination and the erasure of its contemporary traces. (p. 30)

Although Jolly contends that the past should be used "as a resource for a different future" (p. 21) she does not explain how the legacies of apartheid continue to affect lives and economies in the present. In relegating racism to the past, Jolly's study disavows the centrality of white privilege in contemporary South Africa.

Jolly advocates a multiculturalism that silences race through the strategic valorization of ethnic difference. Recreating another dichotomy, she stipulates that speaking of difference in general is progressive, but focusing on racial difference in particular is reactionary. She argues that in order to achieve a "postapartheid era" it is necessary to highlight the "multiple differences among and within racial groups" (p. 23). Jolly stresses in particular that "there are marked differences within the black community in South Africa" (p. 23) and argues that eliding these differences would mean maintaining "the hegemony of apartheid" (p. 23). However, racial domination in South Africa, as in the rest of the African continent, has relied precisely on fabricating and highlighting ethnic differences among Black people as a fundamental divide-and-conquer strategy. In South Africa, Mahmood Mamdani (1996) explains, white domination was imposed by means of a "system of ethnic pluralism (institutional segregation), so that everyone, victims no less than beneficiaries, may appear as minorities" (p. 7). Since ethnic categories in South Africa remain embedded in racialized structures of power, highlighting ethnic differences, far from being a viable antiracist strategy, remains a powerful technique for silencing white economic dominance.

Jolly's essay is unable to escape the paradoxes of colorblindness. Whereas she asserts that it is necessary to "avoid essentially racial oppositions in contemporary South African literature" (p. 22), Jolly does speak of "black illiteracy," a "black majority," or a "generation of black Afrikaans writers" (pp. 27–28). In various instances, Jolly speaks of Black people by referring to "culture" (p. 24) instead of race. Employing racially coded language, however, does not mean transcending race altogether for language can sustain racial meanings also when racial terms are not explicitly used. Expressing differences in cultural rather than racial terms, as Claire Jean Kim (2000) explains, is yet another typical move of colorblind talk. Appeals to culture, which have served to refer surreptitiously to racialized Others since colonial times, continue to be a central device for the occlusion and concurrent reproduction of racial power.

Minimizing white privilege, Jolly asserts that it is "profoundly irresponsible" for white South African academics to "assume that their position of relative privilege renders them politically disabled" and that therefore "their work is futile, since it does not affect the 'masses'" (p. 24). Who are the masses that Jolly mentions here? And if these masses are not to be understood in racial terms, as Black masses, then why do they stand in opposition to *white* critics? The article exposes white anxieties about being "politically disabled" (p. 24) in a democratic South Africa. Despite Jolly's request that scholars do away with race, her work cannot transcend it.

Jolly is not the only literary scholar who views acknowledging difference in general as emancipatory, but recognizing the specific reality of racial difference as reactionary. In *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid*,

one of the most important books on post-1994 literary and cultural production, Sarah Nuttall (2009) writes:

> South African studies have, for a long time, been overdetermined by the reality of apartheid. … A theory of entanglement can be linked in important ways to a notion of desegregation. One could argue that the system of racial segregation in the political, social and cultural structure of the country paradoxically led to … a form of segregated theory. Segregated theory is theory premised on categories of race difference, oppression versus resistance, and perpetrators versus victims … (p. 31)

In this work, as in "City Forms and Writing the 'Now' in South Africa," Nuttall (2004) argues that scholarship on creolization produced abroad proves useful to theorize South African social relations in the present, particularly in light of the need to grapple with "a legacy of violence in a society based on inequality." Nuttall (2009, p. 31) conceptualizes postcolonial theory's emphasis on difference as "a political resource in struggles against imperial drives to homogenize and universalize identity politics" and constructs hybridity and entanglement as intrinsically progressive categories.

Given that apartheid confined writers and critics into a persistent engagement with Black–white conflict, the abandonment of racial dualism in post-apartheid scholarship and the pursuit for alternative ways of reading is often seen as intrinsically positive. Importantly, in "Preparing Ourselves for Freedom" Albie Sachs (1998) lamented the fact that in Black apartheid literature frequently "ambiguity and contradiction are completely shut out," for he believed that "the power of art lies precisely in its capacity to expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions" (p. 240). It is thus not surprising that Nuttall conceptualizes the move toward hybridity and away from an engagement with racial difference, literally, as an instance of "desegregation" (p. 31). However, this obfuscates the fact that hybridity is itself the historical product of racialized violence and that the eagerness to abandon notions of "oppression versus resistance" in favor of a colorblind heterogeneity is itself a racial move.

While the concept of hybridity is useful to describe the de facto historical, racial, aesthetic or sociocultural characteristics of post-colonial societies, it is not a neutral signifier. An emphasis on hybridity or entanglement can open up theoretical spaces for rethinking both apartheid and contemporary social relations. Still, it is necessary to foreground that notions of hybridity in South Africa and other post-colonial societies are inscribed within hierarchies of power that remain racially defined.[6] Discursively detaching racial and cultural mixture from the institutional racism that produced them entrenches the structures of domination that the move purports to challenge. As Cooppan (2000) explains, "to imagine, as contemporary post-colonial studies sometimes seems to do, that we can simply choose one (hybrid) model of identity over another (particularist) one … is to forget precisely the ways in which these conceptual categories are collectively bound to one another" (p. 29). Rather than being progressive per se, as Joshua Lund (2006) writes, hybridity is often invoked to undercut affirmative action policies, arguments for reparations, and land redistribution in Latin America, South Africa, the United States and elsewhere. Not

only are celebratory notions of hybridity unable to create a "genuinely post-colonial future" (Jolly, 1995, p. 21), but the example of Latin American societies in which *mestizaje* is the dominant national ideology teaches us that invocations of 'mixture' often serve merely the interests of elites attempting to protect their racial privileges.

In *Entanglement*, the valorization of hybridity and critique of scholarship that emphasizes racial power are accompanied by attempts to rescue white people from stigmatization. It should not be taken for granted that Nuttall's study, comparable with what we saw in Seekings and Nattrass (2005), directs the reader's attention towards the growth of the Black middle-class and increase in intraracial inequality but silences white economic dominance. As Steyn and Foster (2008) affirm, "black elites are a decoy, drawing attention away from where to bulk of the country's wealth is still to be found: middle- and upper-class white South Africa" (p. 42). Scholarship that idealizes abstract notions of hybridity, mixture, créolité, entanglement, or difference while refusing to acknowledge Black people's concrete experiences of racial oppression, further reinforces the normativity of whiteness.

The enforcement of colorblindness through the appropriation of deconstructionism and postcolonial theory is not confined to literary scholarship. In "The Modern Seduction of Race: Whither Social Constructionism?," Soudien (2012b) also cites Derrida in an attempt to demonize racial categories. While Jolly (1995) accuses Derrida of reproducing colonial logics, Soudien co-opts Derrida to argue that the employment of the category 'race' constitutes a challenge much more serious "than its manifestations in apartheid" (p. 20). Appropriating Derrida's powerful definition of apartheid, Soudien contends that *race itself* is the "most racism of racisms" (p. 20). Although Derrida's writing is condemned in one case and valued in the other, its strategic location in Jolly and Soudien's texts fulfills the same function: antiracist thought is decontextualized in these studies and put at the service of racial power.

Even the writings of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko are distorted and appropriated. In *Realising the Dream: Unlearning the Logic of Race in the South African School*, Soudien (2012a) co-opts Biko's reconceptualization of apartheid racial categories in order to demonize affirmative action. Correspondingly, in "Apartheid Race Categories: Daring to Question their Continued Use," Erasmus (2012) invokes the Black Consciousness Movement to enforce colorblindness. She states that in the 1970s the Movement defined blackness "*not* as a race category or classification, but rather a global political identification premised on resistance to oppression in contexts of white supremacy" (p. 1—emphasis in the text). Erasmus here misinterprets the gesture. Biko's politicized understanding of blackness was not a theoretical intervention in the rethinking of apartheid racial categories per se. Biko was concerned with the concrete need to forge solidarities among people of color that could lead to the dismantlement of apartheid. Biko's definition of blackness is intrinsically related to racial oppression. For Biko (1971/2002), Blacks are "those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and [identify] themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realization of their aspirations" (p. 48). Biko makes clear that being

racialized as "non-white" is a necessary precondition to claiming blackness. Given that he envisioned "complete ownership of land" (p. 149) for Black people, Biko would radically oppose any attempt to silence racial dispossession today.

In "How Do I Live in This Strange Place?", a philosophical essay that sparked heated debate about whiteness in the South African press and in online forums, Samantha Vice (2010) also cites Biko. Arguing that white privilege is "nonvoluntary in its origins" (p. 325), Vice invokes Biko to further corroborate her claims. "It is not as if whites are allowed to enjoy privilege only when they declare their solidarity with the ruling party," Biko claims in Vice's quote. However, Biko's understanding of racial power speaks to a different concern: not to white privilege as something that "may be more or less consciously embraced or rejected" (p. 325), as Vice defines it, but as something that *cannot* be simply rejected through an act of will. Biko explains that profiting from white privilege does not require active allegiance to white supremacist parties or ideologies. At the same time, he sustains precisely the opposite of what Vice asserts: that white privilege is not a somatic habit that can be minimized by changing our mindsets. It is not the prelapsarian innocence of whites that Biko articulates, but rather white people's collective responsibility for the reproduction of the racist status quo.

Emphasizing the primacy of economics in understanding and combating racial domination, Biko made clear that in a democratic South Africa "for meaningful change to appear there needs to be an attempt at reorganizing the whole economic pattern" (p. 149). Although Vice recognizes that in post-1994 South Africa "materially nothing much has changed for anyone, black or white" (p. 332), she does not suggest that one appropriate reaction to privilege would be to work towards relinquishing some of the *material* benefits of whiteness. Vice's project presumes that white moral regeneration can occur prior to, and irrespective of, wealth redistribution. The task of 'lessening' whiteness need not cost white people anything. In collapsing white habits and white advantages, Vice silences white agency and fails to make visible white privilege as something *wanted* and guarded through the ongoing exploitation of people of color. The location of antiracist thought within much South African scholarship that enforces colorblindness—whether in literature, education, sociology, or philosophy—reveals the ongoing currency of appropriation as a technique of silencing and the centrality of active investment in the production of racialized knowledge across disciplinary boundaries.

Conclusion

On June 6, 2014, the South African Institute of Race Relations (IRR) issued a press release titled "Affirmative Action is Killing Babies and must be Scrapped." Citing the death of three children after they drank contaminated water in the municipality of Bloemhof, the CEO of the IRR Frans Cronje argued that "the officials responsible for these deaths were appointed, at least in part, on grounds of race-based affirmative action and that *a direct causal link therefore exists between the policy and the deaths*" (IRR, 2014, n.p.—italics in the text). The demonization of affirmative action detracts

attention from white responsibility for the ongoing abject life conditions faced by most Black South Africans and speaks powerfully to the *possessive investment in whiteness* (Lipsitz, 2006). Although the consequences of racial domination in the present are nowhere as evident as in the differential life expectancy for Black and white people, even the IRR today publishes colorblind life expectancy statistics that do not once mention the word *race* (see IRR, 2012a, 2012b). Rather than enabling racial justice, the Institute funds scholarship that enforces colorblindness (see Holborn, 2010). It is troubling that institutions allegedly devoted to making racism visible silence institutional racism.

The IRR is not an exception. Strikingly, South African scholars who embrace colorblind doctrines are appointed to administrative positions created to rectify racialized imbalances in the student and faculty body. Crain Soudien, for example, condemns affirmative action policies (see Soudien, 2012a), yet he formerly chaired the Ministerial Review Committee into Transformation in Higher Education and is currently deputy vice-chancellor in the area of transformation and social responsiveness at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The term 'transformation' in the post-apartheid context has come to indicate official and unofficial attempts to redress racial inequality, especially in educational institutions and the workplace. That the scholarship of an official who should guarantee desegregation demonizes measures needed to make deracialization possible speaks powerfully to the institutionalization of colorblindness in South African academia.

This has serious material consequences. Concerned about racial inequality and ongoing incidents of overt racism on campuses around the nation, in July 2014 the South African Human Rights Commission hosted a national hearing that addressed the lack of transformation in South African universities. In the meantime, UCT unveiled a new admission policy that took a step away from race-based affirmative action, with 75% of incoming students now being "selected without race being taken into account" (Price, 2014a, n.p.). If most Black students remain excluded from access to higher education, South African faculty of color fare even worse. In 2012, there were merely 34 Black and 29 Coloured full-time female professors *in the entire country* (Price, 2014b, n.p.). As if that was not enough, Afrikaans universities such as Stellenbosch and North West continue to vehemently resist change (De Vos, 2014, n.p.).

In a society in which racial inequality is rampant, the desire to suppress race as a category of analysis, as we have seen, always creates textual paradoxes. It also produces meta-discursive contradictions. It is ironic, for example, that Gerhard Maré should direct a Centre for Critical Research on Race and Identity while insisting that we should no longer talk about race. If "race thinking," as Maré argues, is not "appropriate in a democratic 'non racial' South Africa" (Maré, 2003, p. 27; see also Maré, 2001, 2013), then why study race? If race does not matter in South Africa, then what is the value of engaging it academically? The fact that Maré has devoted most of his recent scholarship to examining race, implies that, at least to the scholar himself, race does matter a great deal.

As has hopefully become clear through this study, the recurrence of racial disavowal and the rhetorical contradictions it textually produces need to be adequately accounted for in the assessment of post-apartheid scholarship and beyond. The presence of dominant racial ideologies in the works examined herein cannot be considered fortuitous and much less the product of ignorance. It is the consequence of racialized knowledge and is emblematic of an active investment in maintaining the status quo. Although many white people may "[take] for granted unearned entitlements that come at the expense of racialized others, and generally [lack] insight into the normalized racial order" (Steyn, 2012, p. 11), ignorance cannot explain the *systematic* promotion of colorblindness across national contexts, disciplines, and discourses that continues to sustain white hegemony across national borders (see Lipsitz, 2011; Mngxitama, 2009; Nascimento, 1989; Winant, 2001). Importantly, although ignorance was structurally produced by the apartheid regime through segregation, Steve Biko insisted on bringing white people's knowledge about their privilege to the forefront of analysis, rather than their alleged obliviousness about racial domination (see Biko, 2002, p. 19). Scholarship on whiteness that does not account for *knowledge* and *agency* risks reinscribing colorblindness, "an ally to White supremacy" (Simpson, 2008, p. 142). In grappling with the rhetorics of racial power and the reality of racial inequity in the present, it is useful to shift the academic lens from white ignorance to deliberate disavowal.

Since colorblind doctrines dominate South African academia, too few courses today give adequate attention to apartheid and even fewer engage Steve Biko's writings. Revealingly, during the first semester of 2010 the Department of Historical Studies at the UCT offered three graduate courses on the Jewish experience, one of them specifically on anti-Semitism, but *none* on anti-Black racism in South Africa or explicitly on apartheid. In the meantime, not unlike Ethnic Studies programs in Arizona and the United States at large, the UCT Centre for African Studies has to battle to ensure its continuing existence. As white domination persists, the South African case reveals itself as symptomatic of an ongoing *global* assault on the knowledges and lives of people of color. Millions of students of all backgrounds are being indoctrinated into naturalizing and reproducing racial inequality.

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Notes

[1] In line with its South African usage, herein I employ the term *Black* both to denote specifically the Indigenous African population (approx. 79.4% of the total South African population) and to include the Coloured community (8.9%) and the Indian/Asian population (2.6%). This does not mean ignoring that, historically and presently, there are significant differences among and within these groups. *Black* is herein thus sometimes used as synonymous with *people of color*, a term much more common in the U.S. context than in the South African. This usage of the term "Black" also recognizes that Black people represent the vast majority of the South African population. For racial demographics see: Statistics South Africa (2012). On the Marikana massacre see, for example, Alexander, Lekgowa, Mmope, Sinwell, and Xezwi, (2013) and Nhlabathi (2013).

[2] I borrow the term *racial power* from Claire Jean Kim (2000) who defines it as follows: "Racial power refers to the racial status quo's systemic tendency towards self-reproduction. It finds concrete political, economic, social, and cultural processes that tend cumulatively to perpetuate White dominance over non-Whites" (p. 2).

[3] On racial inequality in South Africa see, for example, Ansell (2006), Dlanga (2010), Emery (2008), Levenstein (2010), Ratele and Laubscher (2010), and Winant (2001). On the land question, see, for example, Ntsebeza (2011) and Ntsebeza and Hall (2007).

[4] For example, South African scholarship that enforces colorblindness also exists in communication (Bornman, 2011), demography (Moultrie & Dorrington, 2012), law (Stone & Erasmus, 2012), and most likely any other field that engages race and racism in some capacity.

[5] For book-length studies by the author that enforce colorblindness, see Jansen (2009b, 2011).

[6] See Gqola (2010) on white appropriations of 'racial mixture' discourses in post-apartheid South Africa.

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