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21ST-CENTURY NEO-ANTICOLONIAL LITERATURE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR A
NEW GLOBAL ORDER

by

SHAUNA MORGAN KIRLEW

Under the Direction of Dr. Carol Marsh-Lockett

ABSTRACT

21st-century Neo-anticolonial Literature and the Struggle for a New Global Order explores the twenty-first-century fiction of five writers and investigates the ways in which their works engage the legacy and evolution of empire, and, in particular, the expansion of global capitalism to the detriment of already-subjugated communities. Taking up a recent call by Postcolonial scholars seeking to address the contemporary challenges of the postcolonial condition, this project traces out three distinct forms of engagement that function as a resistance in the texts. The dissertation introduces these concepts via a mode of analysis I have called Neo-anticolonialism, a counter-hegemonic approach which, I argue, is unique to the twenty-first century but rooted in the anticolonial work of Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. Building on a

foundation laid by those activist scholars, this project argues that Neo-anticolonialism necessitates the bridging of discourse and activism; thus, the dissertation delineates the utility of Neo-anticolonialism in both literary scholarship and practical application. Through a close analysis of the fiction of the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Jamaican Michelle Cliff, Amitav Ghosh, a South Asian writer, African American writer Edward P. Jones, and Black British writer Caryl Phillips, the project offers a Neo-anticolonial reading of several twenty-first-century texts. In doing so, I explain the depiction of these instances of resistance as Neo-anticolonial Refractions, literary devices which function as prisms that cast images thus exposing the perpetuation of inequality in the twenty-first century and its direct link to the past epoch. Moreover, each chapter, through an explication of the refractions, reveals how resistance occurs in the face of the brutal reality of oppression and how this cadre of writers engages with the history of empire as well as with its contemporary permutations.

INDEX WORDS: Neo-anticolonialism, Capitalism, Anti-capitalism, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Michelle Cliff, Amitav Ghosh, Edward P. Jones, Caryl Phillips, Empire, 21st-century Postcolonial literature, Postcolonial theory, Activist scholarship

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SHAUNA MORGAN KIRLEW

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2012

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Shauna Morgan Kirlew
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For my parents, Verna and Ranford Morgan and Reverend Adassa and the late Clovis Morgan,
who always believed that a better world was possible.

And, of course, to John and *die Zwillinge*, Ella and Neena, whose patience, understanding, and
affection provided the greatest motivation.

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Many years ago on the island of Jamaica, in a rural district fondly known as Gravel *Grung*, my mother dipped my 3-year old index finger into a well of voters' ink. I remember looking at the tinted finger in that one-room basic school-turned-voting-precinct and thinking that I, too, had done something great. In that moment, a child, years away from the legal voting age, came to understand what it could mean to be empowered, to be given a chance to speak and stand up for something. The feelings which overcame me then, I believe, had more to do with my witnessing others, old and young, women and men, cast their ballots and dip their fingers, than it did with my mother's effort to entertain her child. Maybe it was not in that instant when I realized, but certainly in the elections that followed, some rife with violence, I reflected on the ink—what it felt like—what it must have meant to my parents and others whose vision for a Socialist Jamaica was then ripe with optimism.

That time in Jamaica, I confess, left me with a kind of naïve idealism which, in some ways, continues to shape my outlook. The seed of social justice long ago planted by my parents was nurtured throughout the years both inside and outside of academia and left me grappling with a way to bridge my need for tangible work and my desire for intellectual inquiry. Several semesters of courses with faculty members who would ultimately become my exam and dissertation committee members, led me to interrogate the very framework I utilized on a daily basis. My deep gratitude goes to these individuals: Dr. Carol Marsh-Lockett, for being a guiding light and voice of wisdom; Dr. Ian Almond, for always pushing me to go well beyond the comfortable answers; and Dr. Renée Schatteman, my dedicated reader, who introduced me to literature that opened up my world in profound ways. Their guidance of, and challenges to, my

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Discourse and the Evolution of Power	1
1.2 An Evolving Imperialism.....	4
1.3 Postcolonialisms.....	7
2 NEO-ANTICOLONIALISM: AN APPROACH FOR THE 21ST-CENTURY	20
2.1 Neo-anticolonialism as a Mode of Analysis.....	22
2.2 Neo-anticolonialism as Praxis	25
2.3 Neo-Anticolonial Predecessors and Literature for the Sake of Activism.....	29
3 (RE)TRAUMATIZATION OF THE DIASPORA, A LEGACY OF OPPRESSION	36
3.1 Passages: Lessons from the Shores of England	42
3.2 Sons of Empire.....	43
3.3 The Black Man at Home.....	51
3.4 Away from England	58
3.5 Exiled in America, ‘Somewhere in the Darkness’	61
3.6 Burnt Cork and the Economy of Racial Caricature	64
3.7 Sexuality and the Black Man as Phallus	69
3.8 Black Women Undone by the ‘Whiteness of Winter’	72
4 LITERARY EVIDENCE: HISTORICAL FICTION AND THE STORY OF EMPIRE. 84	
4.1 Footprints of Empire in Wartime	86
4.2 Environmental Sites of Resistance.....	91

4.3	Colonized as Participants in Capitalism	98
4.4	Shifting Lenses and Relocating Power	100
4.5	Nation-building and the Legacy of Empire	104
4.6	Privileging the Underclass Lens.....	107
4.7	Sites of Resistance in the Academy and Beyond	114
4.8	Performance and Mimicry in the Parlour	118
5	TRUE-TRUE: NEW NARRATIVES FROM THE DIASPORA	124
5.1	The Legacy of Slavery and an Emerging Black Middle Class	126
5.2	A Problematic Agency	131
5.3	Un-true Womanhood and the Power of Capital.....	138
5.4	‘Up out of the South’: No Land Promised/No Promised Land	149
5.5	Aunt Hagar and Ishmaelite America	151
5.6	Striving for Abraham’s Blessing (In a Shopping Bag)	155
5.7	Departure Points and 21st-century Currents: Into the Interior of Whiteness..	159
6	STRUGGLE FOR A NEW GLOBAL ORDER: DISCOURSE AND ACTIVISM AS CATALYSTS FOR REVOLUTION.....	166
	WORKS CITED.....	180

1 INTRODUCTION

As long as imperialism exists it will, by definition, exert its domination over other countries. Today that domination is called neocolonialism.

Che Guevara¹

It is a new society that we must create...a society rich with all the productive power of modern times, warm with all the fraternity of olden days.

Aimé Césaire²

1.1 Discourse and the Evolution of Power

When Che Guevara named neocolonialism in a speech given at the Second Economic Seminar of Afro-Asian solidarity in Algiers in 1965, he likely did not imagine that this neocolonialism, against which he spoke and fought, would persist and thrive into the next century. Anti-colonialists and scholars from various fields in the humanities and social sciences, among others, have made critiques of various neocolonial projects; but the mode of anti-colonialism which moves against twenty-first-century neocolonialism is functioning much in the same way as it did against the later colonial and imperial projects of the twentieth century. Within the somewhat safe space that the academy has created for critics of imperialism, Anti-colonialists in higher education often assert themselves, writing and teaching in their respective disciplines with little or no action to complement their work. Matthieu Renault notes, for example, the occurrence in the Western academy to “overinterpret and distort Fanonian thought, to decontextualize it from its roots in the colonial situation and the struggles for national liberation, among others” (106). He further argues that “an authentic, unproductive *conflict of interpretations* arises; caught in the “either...or”: between the “historical [Frantz] Fanon” and the “postcolonial Fanon,” no reconciliation is possible, and one must choose one’s camp” (106). It is arguable that many academics opted for the postcolonial Fanon—one relegated to the sphere of

theory and discourse production. In contrast, there is a worldwide desire among, primarily, the underclass to enact real change. In Tunisia we witnessed a cry of the subaltern³ that led to what is now being referred to as Arab Spring.⁴ Across continental Europe, the United Kingdom, throughout Africa, and in the United States Occupy Movements⁵ millions of people rallied the call for a dismantling of the economic hegemony that continues to ravage the globe. Until these most recent actions, which began in North Africa and served as a model for what ultimately spread across the globe, revolutionary movements diminished in the late 1970s and responses to neocolonialism have appeared as productions of discourse rather than of action. It was not until recently that the Modern Language Association, in the wake of the Occupy protests, issued a resolution regarding academic freedom (yet to be passed) to support that:

...members of the academic community have the right to challenge legislative or administrative decisions curtailing educational access, to oppose political interference in such allied academic areas as ethnic and environmental studies, to teach and promote the work of controversial writers, and to address social-justice issues relevant to their communities without fear of reprisal. (mla.org)⁶

This seems to suggest that there is a new desire amongst academics to actively respond to the numerous crises of the early twenty-first century; however, the absence of radical academics that has marked the past decades has cemented a pattern of verbal intercourse without the gravid action that is required to effect change. I contend that this is one of the reasons there is consistent evolution in the colonial enterprise—free from any similarly consistent evolution of anti-colonial efforts. This, a point of departure for my project, holds that the works of Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon are more resonant now as we think of the future of postcolonial literature and

theory (as well as Postcolonial Studies as a whole), than it was before the emergence of postcolonialism. Césaire declared that participants in the colonizing mission came from every discipline; I maintain that anti-colonialists, too, must come from every discipline. Thus, my effort calls for a new cadre of activists from all areas of society who will move against an evolving colonialism—one which has morphed from sixteenth-century imperialism or the so-called discoveries, to colonization and human degradation through various forms of enslavement, to the new imperialism of the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, to the neocolonial projects of today. More specifically, I contend that the twenty-first century presents a new opportunity for academics to not only write against, but also act and move against, the current world order that is driven by racist capitalism⁷. By way of what I have called Neo-anticolonialism, a critical approach to the current era that directly engages and interrogates past modes of exploitation, academics can seek out methods of resistance that will be effective against twenty-first century hegemony. This dissertation considers the contemporary permutations of power and, specifically, the ways in which the projects of empire have evolved in a multimodal effort to maintain domination. In doing so, it investigates literature of the African Diaspora and South Asia through a Neo-anticolonial lens and reveals how these works create Neo-anticolonial Refractions: a gazing back and the shining of a narrative light back onto the past epoch to cast an image on the current one in a way that results in a critique of contemporary hegemonic structures as they relate to the economy or access to capital. This project aims to offer a look that catalyzes results that are now limited by evolving power structures and extant postcolonial theory.

1.2 An Evolving Imperialism

Linda Tuhiwahi Smith, in *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, argues that the “concepts of imperialism and colonialism are crucial ones which are used across a range of disciplines, often with meanings which are taken for granted” and she continues by noting that “the two terms are interconnected and what is generally agreed upon is that colonialism is but one expression of imperialism” (21). Smith outlines four forms of European imperialism: imperialism as economic expansion, imperialism as the subjugation of ‘others’, imperialism as an idea or spirit with many forms of realization, and imperialism as a discursive field of knowledge (21). For the purpose of this study, I will mainly focus on imperialism as economic expansion, functioning with the tools of colonialism and neocolonialism which have morphed into a multimodal effort to dominate.

This ever-evolving dominant power, as described by Aimé Césaire in *Discourse on Colonialism*, went from “the tortures of the Middle Ages and the Inquisition” to imperialism and colonization to Nazism and to British and American “barbarism” (67). Césaire suggested that the evil which led to “Hitlerism” and the Holocaust had always been present and tolerated by Europe (36). He argued that Europe “tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples” (36). That Nazism and the ideas which shaped Hitler emerged from an already “stricken” or “morally diseased” Europe, suggests that the aforementioned ideological plague was not dying as Césaire suggested in 1955; it was merely changing its shape and anatomy—evolving as it were (39). As such, the advent of the twenty-first century brought countless discussions reflecting on the past epoch and numerous considerations for the future. In the midst of irreversible climate change, a global push for economic power, and new and

multiple ways of creating enemies or the idea of an enemy, world leaders race for the chance to build and maintain empires of the twenty-first century. With several models at hand, from fascist Europe to violent U.S. capitalism in Latin America, the trajectory of those with power was aimed at reaping all the spoils of the future while avoiding all the pitfalls of the past. The watchful eyes of many counter-hegemonic scholars have also followed this direction of power.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in their recent texts *Empire* and *Multitude*, take on the task of tracing the genealogy and evolution of empire. The authors point to a new global base of power “composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule” (xii). This uniting rule, imperialism, is said to be different than contemporary permutations of empire. Hardt and Negri mark out the emergence of the Roman Empire and trace empire-building to the contemporary period while emphasizing the shift in sovereignty. Whereas empires were once located in some geographical center, the authors suggest that the twentieth century saw a shift, now solidified in this century, which effectively transcends boundaries. Empire no longer has a global center. Hardt and Negri also argue that the new focus of empire is production, and they situate capitalism as a new tool of expansion. Rooting this capitalist shift firmly in the United States, the authors suggest that empire of today was “born through the global expansion of the internal U.S. constitutional project” (182). More specifically, empire is not centered in the United States, but instead it has a global reach which hauls with it U.S. American characteristics.

Unlike the work of Hardt and Negri, C. Richard King’s *Postcolonial America* collects a wide array of essays focused on situating the United States as an empire reeling from postcolonial and neocolonial experiences. In his introduction, “Dislocating Postcoloniality, Relocating American Empire,” King refers to the “interpenetration of a decaying (European)

imperialism aimed at territorial colonization and at the exploitation of natural and human resources and an ascendant (American) imperialism primarily concerned with political control without colonization and the circulation of cultural commodities” (2). This point, similar to Hardt and Negri’s sovereignty shift, aims to destabilize extant postcolonial discourse and problematize commonly held views about U.S. American participation. The articles trace the emergence of the U.S. American Empire by means of religious practices, immigration regulations, and economic practices, among others.

Numerous other texts exploring contemporary conceptions of empire, coming from diverse political positions, have emerged within the last decade. Conservative British historian Niall Ferguson has also engaged discussions about the United States as empire with his recent book *Colossus: The Price of America’s Empire*, a text of “selective history” according to Pankaj Mishra⁸. He also wrote *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*. His texts, in many ways, represent a contemporary and very specific leaning towards global expansion. Ferguson’s frequent nods to neo-conservatives, coupled with his global economic position contributes to the valorization of empire and to the rhetoric of empire as the bearer of democracy—a civilizing mission in twenty-first century fashion. More strikingly, his most recent work, *Civilisation: the West and the Rest*, as argued by Pankaj Mishra, “remains defiantly loyal to his neoimperialist vision,” and presents old conservative traditions dressed in the language of progress.⁹

Textual dialogues continue to emerge; however, they have not yet taken the shape of a coherent discourse aimed at carving a niche in academia. The onus to respond is on the cadre of postcolonial critics whose incessant debates about postcoloniality may well leave them unequipped to engage. If, as Leela Gandhi says, “postcolonialism can be seen as a theoretical

resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath... a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past” then we must ask the question: who will take on the imperial neocolonial projects of the twenty-first century (4)? I contend that while postcolonial theory is useful, as Gandhi as outlined, its role, solely as an “academic task,” will not address the growing empire of Hardt and Negri’s texts.

1.3 Postcolonialisms

Still, there is much to learn from postcolonial theory in terms of its failures and successes. Several radical academics have taken on postcolonialism in an effort to push the discipline beyond its current boundaries. Fernando Coronil’s discussion of Latin American postcolonial studies forms a veritable challenge to extant theories of Postcoloniality. His move to engage Latin American studies with postcolonial discourse provokes and even destabilizes ideas of the East/West divide, and his argument in “Latin American Postcolonial Studies and Global Decolonization” calls for a reconsideration of Postcoloniality, whereby an examination of the United States’ role in imperialism is approached. This Postcoloniality, according to Leela Gandhi, is “the postcolonial condition [which is] inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation” (*Postcolonial Theory* 3). This condition is one which plagues former colonies and, arguably, settler colonies across the globe. These colonized places, once referred to as the Second and Third world, are often collectively described as The Global South.

Ideas about a Global South began emerging as early as 1982. Articles such as “Global Order, the West and the Third World,” by Volkmar Kohler which appeared in the *German Foreign Affairs Review*, as well as more recent texts like Jonathan Rigg’s 2007 book *An Everyday Geography of the Global South*, engage a discussion of communities in the Global South. In addition, the United Nations Development Program firmly locates so-called

developing countries as The Global South. While it is important to note that countries in the so-called Global South cannot and should not be minimized to any idea of a singular monolithic oppressed, they do, according to the United Nations, “share a set of vulnerabilities and challenges” (*UNDP* par. 1). It is arguable that these similarities manifest in very unique ways, and often appear in the literature of this so-called Global South. The emergence of the Global South and the challenges that the so-called Global South communities face began with European Imperialism. Linda Tuhiwahi Smith’s assertions in *Decolonising Methodologies* is worth noting again: imperialism is a multilayered project and colonialism is but one form of imperialism (21). More specifically, imperialism, in the Eurocentric model, moved to expand European wealth and economy, subjugate native people, and foster the “imperial imagination” by broadening an ideology of superiority (21). Smith calls for a “constant reworking of our understanding of the impact of imperialism and colonialism” (21). Likewise, Fernando Coronil calls for a reconsideration of postcolonial field work, specifically as it relates to Latin American (a term he also problematizes) Studies.

Coronil’s argument, that the discourse of postcolonialism is exclusionary as it neglects to consider the work of Latin American scholars, approaches a critique of the Academy of the United States, and it presents a non-Western Latin America. Considering the idea of this westward (and southern) non-West, it is useful to situate the interrogation of the Academy of the United States (and the community of postcolonial scholars therein) in the experiences, literature, and scholarship of those who are marginalized within the borders of the United States. It is arguable that the work of African Americans, much like the work of Latin American scholars, is an important element to consider in an approach to postcolonial discourse. If, as Coronil argues, we see the “*character* of ‘postcolonial studies’ as one among a diverse set of regional reflections

on the forms and legacies of colonialism, or rather, *colonialisms*” then we must consider the various American continental reflections (221). This would include the reflections of African Americans.

This unique reflection is invaluable, because much like the European exploitation of the communities in what is now referred to as the Global South, the system of enslaving humans in North America manifested as a specific form of domination. The resulting trauma of enslavement and rape, among countless other forms of dehumanization and torture, firmly situates the United States South as a region within the larger community of the postcolonial despite its geographic location. The African American experience in the United States South shares similarities with subjugated groups in the postcolonial world as seen in the literature emerging from various communities. While it can be suggested that non-color individuals in these locales might experience similar challenges, it is arguable that the experiences of people of color in the postcolonial spaces, including the United States South, are directly linked to imperialist (and white supremacist) ideology. More specifically, the literature of African American authors depicts imperial subjugation in very specific ways, and thus capsizes the very terms (Global South/Global North, East/West) used to perpetuate marginal identities.

Paul Gilroy and Charles Cullen Gruesser approach this American postcolonial space with their texts *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* and *Confluences: Postcolonialism, African American Literary Studies, and the Black Atlantic*, respectively. This transcontinental approach allows for a clearer view of the reach of empire and the potential for globalization. While the texts are rooted in literary analyses, their respective advances beg for a connection with other disciplines and a move towards more tangible work. They move against what Leela Gandhi calls the “will-to-forget” which plagues the postcolonial condition. Gandhi

argues that “this ‘will-to-forget’ takes a number of historical forms, and is impelled by a variety of cultural and political motivations” (4). She further suggests that this “postcolonial amnesia is symptomatic of the urge for historical self-invention or the need to make a new start—to erase painful memories of colonial subordination” (4). It is likely that these memories, painful for the oppressed and the free alike, will persist and will continue to plague our academic, social, and emotional spaces until Fernando Coronil’s call to “pluralize colonialism – to recognize its multiple forms as the product of a common historical process of Western expansion” is met (230). Certainly, an in-depth study of African American literature and theory will reveal the multiplicity of colonialism, as seen in the works of Gilroy and Gruesser, but a continued problematization of postcolonialism, as opposed to a widening of the discourse, is likely the progress we need to become effective adversaries to twenty-first-century imperialism.

Broadening the discourse still renders the field trapped within in the realm of the Academy, but challenging the theory to shift into a more political and activist realm could open a breadth of possibilities for meaningful change. Still, this challenge to re-engage postcolonial theory in more radical ways is often met with resistance, as seen in Leela Gandhi’s engagement with the radical postcolonial scholar Aijaz Ahmad. In his article, “The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality,” Aijaz Ahmad problematizes concepts of postcolonial theory. The article focuses on what Ahmad sees as the dissolution of the postcolonial in which a “...very considerable gap...” exists between discourse and Postcoloniality in former colonies (283). This gap, of which Ahmad speaks, is examined comprehensively by Leela Gandhi in *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Gandhi’s holistic look at postcolonial theory moves to not only trace and outline the emergence of postcolonialism, but it also works to analyze how postcolonial theory

functions in European and U.S. American academies, in terms of its role in perpetuating the marginalization of the former colonies.

Gandhi begins by considering the period after colonialism while acknowledging the argument previously mentioned, that “the postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation” (3). She rightly begins her discussion with an analysis of the contributions of Gayatri Spivak and the Subaltern Studies group to fully illustrate that “postcolonial studies has come to represent a confusing and often unpleasant babel of subaltern voices” (3). That these voices become absorbed into academic discourse is a point Gandhi works to expand throughout the text. Within her discussion she moves to translate and connect the numerous voices of postcolonial studies. Moreover, it is particularly interesting that her text engages positively with Ahmad’s essay even as she attempts to problematize his arguments.

Gandhi repeatedly returns to Ahmad’s arguments in her discussions of the intellectual genealogy of postcolonialism, postcolonialism’s opposition to current traditionalism, literature presented as postcolonial, and limitations on postcolonial theory. It can be argued that Gandhi’s text, although critical of Ahmad, relies much on the arguments posited in Ahmad’s work. Thus her introduction to postcolonial theory indirectly recognizes the need for a new mode of inquiry, understanding, and response. Indeed, Ahmad’s radical position is additional fodder for Gandhi’s analyses. Gandhi focuses on the relationship of postcolonialist views and Marxism, and she situates her argument as a brief riposte to Ahmad’s. She begins the engagement by discussing, what she calls Ahmad’s “...insistence upon the theoretical and political incompatibility between Marxist and postcolonialist positions” (24). Even as she notes that, Gandhi goes on to discuss Ahmad’s ideas about the postcolonial intellectual as having “institutional privilege” manifested

as “bourgeois interiority” (58). She notes the relationship between Ahmad’s work and Marxism, and she (possibly inadvertently) illustrates that Ahmad’s ideas about postcolonial intellectuals complement her treatment and discussion of the Academy. Even as she suggests that Ahmad has a “categorical mistrust of intellectual activity in and of itself,” she neglects to discuss his position and ideas about the value and exclusion of intellectual activity outside of Academia (60). In refuting and validating Ahmad’s stances, Gandhi confirms that extant approaches in the field of postcolonial studies are enervated in the twenty-first century.

In further critique of Ahmad’s discussion of the postcolonial intellectual, Gandhi suggests that he portrays the intellectual as “a traveling theorist” (58). While she gives no immediate consideration to his argument about the unprivileged migrant, in a later chapter on postcolonial literatures she acknowledges Aijaz Ahmad’s discussion of the majority of poor migrants’ experiences in the so-called First World. Gandhi at once employs and attempts to refute several elements of Ahmad’s arguments; his work is arguably central to hers. Even as she closes with a discussion of the limits of postcolonial theory, Gandhi acknowledges Ahmad’s contributions to establishing the problems of multiple ideas about (and the dissolution of) postcolonialism. This textual interaction is only one of many examples revealing the need to push twenty-first-century postcolonial studies beyond theory.

In considering the evolution of the field of postcolonial literature and theory—and here I must say Postcolonial Studies as to include disciplines outside of literature—a look back at various critiques of power is valuable. Numerous critics have explored the broad anatomy of empire and neocolonialism. The same year Che Guevara made his speech at the Second Economic Seminar of Afro-Asian solidarity in Algiers in 1965, Kwame N’Krumah published *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Other prominent scholars have contributed to

the discourse on neocolonialism. Jean Paul Sartre contributed *Colonialisme et Néo-colonialisme*, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o released *Barrel of a Pen* and *Decolonising the Mind* several years later. Later on Robert Young also engaged the topic, and more recently, as noted, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt contributed full-length texts to the conversation.

This apocalyptic beast of empire, as described by Jon Stratton¹⁰, has not yet found a worthy opponent, but a nascent resistance begins to emerge more directly in the works of Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad. That these scholars are more critical of, or even hostile towards, Postcolonial Studies is quite telling. Dirlik, in his essay “The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism,” argues that the “popularity that the term *postcolonial* has achieved in the last few years has less to do with its rigorousness as a concept or with the new vistas it has opened up for critical inquiry than it does with the increased visibility of academic intellectuals of Third World Origin as pacesetters in cultural criticism” (295). He follows by discussing the position of postcolonial scholars in the so-called First World, noting that the acceptance they find in that setting has much to do with their silence “on the relationship of the idea of postcolonialism to its context in contemporary capitalism” (295). Dirlik continues with a critique of postcolonial theorists, and he makes a moving argument about the role global capitalism figures in neocolonial projects. His essay, while exposing the problems of postcolonial—or as he suggests in his book length work—postrevolutionary discourse¹¹, offers some ideas for resistance. A moving away from postcoloniality is necessary, because, according to Dirlik, “it [postcoloniality] disguises the power relations that shape a seemingly shapeless world and contributes to a conceptualization of that world that both consolidates and subverts possibilities of resistance” (315). He goes on to say that “postcolonial critics have engaged in valid criticism of past forms of ideological hegemony but have had little to say about its

contemporary figurations (315). Here, Aimé Césaire’s ideas about hegemonic power structures might be useful. How is it that we have seen a consistent evolution in the colonial enterprise—free from any similarly consistent evolution of anti-colonial efforts? Is it a result of what Césaire called “thingification” (42)? Is it because “societies [were] drained of their essences, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out” (Césaire 43)? This is likely the case, but more important is the suggestion that these now drained societies were democratic societies—anti-capitalist even, as Césaire suggested. In as much as the values of these communities were dispersed and/or destroyed globally, so were the various players in the colonial project disseminated—a double effort, in actuality. Césaire declared that participants in the colonizing mission came from every discipline; so anti-colonialists too must come from every discipline. He mentioned the “sadistic governors and greedy bankers...check-licking politicians and subservient judges...venomous journalists, goitrous academics...ethnographers who go in for metaphysics, presumptuous Belgian theologians, chattering intellectuals... paternalists... lovers of exoticism” among other supporters of colonialism (54). This is why, to answer my own question, anti-colonial efforts have been less consistent, less aggressive, and less advanced than the neocolonial projects. Césaire, who gave us *Discourse on Colonialism* even before we had Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* or Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, had long considered the multifaceted work of colonization—or the European ailment—its sore of “Murderous Humanitarianism” (Crevel, et al qtd. in Kelley 19). He recognized and railed against its systemic operation. His foresight puts us directly in the midst of contemporary American imperialism and neocolonialism (with its twenty-first-century racism and Orientalism leading the world economy) when he argues that the high level of barbarism in Western Europe

is surpassed only by that of the United States (47). He goes on to mention the “decent fellow across the way” who is not a member of the SS or a gangster but a so-called “respectable” member of the community (47). It is this “decent fellow” with whom we now engage. It is this fellow who leads the globalization of capitalism in the world.

Robin D.G. Kelley, author of “A Poetics of Anticolonialism,” the most recent introduction to Césaire’s *Discourse*, might be right in suggesting that Césaire anticipated the explosion of Postcolonial Studies (9). Kelley further asserts that Césaire’s lesson to radical postcolonial theorists is that “colonial [hence neocolonial] domination required a whole way of thinking...the official apparatus might have been removed, but the political, economic, and cultural links established by colonial domination still remain with some alterations” (27). It is with these remaining links and alterations that this study is primarily concerned. These vestiges, now patched together and evolving, are what we see as twenty-first-century neocolonialism, and thus we must develop “a whole [new] way of thinking” to comprehend and ultimately eradicate this domination. The neocolonialism of this century includes an expansion of global economy which enables exploitation to go unchecked because of the nature of transnational business arrangements. The power structure also works to create an official narrative—one which is positive and claims to promote global prosperity; and it allows for the demonizing of already subjugated groups. There is much more to learn about how today’s neocolonialism oppresses in order to launch an effective fight against it. I maintain that the literature of the twenty-first century, coming from the authors included in this project open up possibilities for moving against neocolonialism.

Edward Said, whose seminal work *Orientalism* is credited at having launched the field of Postcolonial Studies, moved to de-center hegemonic authority and continues to serve as a tool

for engaging neocolonialism. He explained the elements of Orientalism and their constant interchange in an effort to maintain western domination. More importantly, Said showed us that ideas about the so-called Orient (and ‘Others’) are European inventions. He stated that “[without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormous and systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period]” (2). Like Césaire, Said recognized that there was an ideological evolution occurring in imperialism. Scholars such as those in the Subaltern Studies group, like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Partha Chatterjee, who were influenced by Said, as well as critics like Simon Gikandi, began to write about the experiences of those suffering under the legacy of imperialism and burgeoning imperialist projects. However, some of them would become a part of the intellectual west which would ultimately lead to a form of resistance relegated to academic discourse—frequently looking backwards. While their look at the past is invaluable, its trajectory resulted in an inability to actively keep up with the ever-evolving neoimperialism. More recently however, individuals like Linda Tuhiwahi Smith have engaged a discussion of “concepts of imperialism” by illustrating the varied mechanisms of the practice. Smith’s work, in particular, calls for a look at the different players in imperialism and the ideas they generate. More specifically, she suggests that we differentiate those which “reflect a view from the imperial center” from those which are “generated by writers whose understanding of imperialism and colonialism have been based either on membership of and experience within colonized societies” (22). In her analysis of imperialism, in which colonialism is but one project, Smith takes issue with the evolution of the project itself, as well as its shifting nomenclature. So that when “the word globalization is substituted for the word imperialism, or when the prefix

‘post’ is attached to colonial, we are no longer simply talking about historical formations which are still lingering in our consciousness” (Smith 24). Smith calls for a compounded change where, in her community, indigenous people will move against the established history, theory, narratives, language, and binaries. She argues that “being on the margins of the world has had dire consequences [and] being incorporated within the world’s marketplace has different implications and in turn requires the mounting of new forms of resistance” (24). Her recognition of the contemporary relationship between commerce and empire is also complemented by Hardt and Negri’s assertions. More recently, individuals like the previously discussed Gayatri Spivak, have also begun to interrogate capitalism by way of literary studies in a way that echoes Césaire’s argument. Her recent text *Death of a Discipline*, among other tasks, asks how literary scholars can shift their focus to look more broadly at the field. In an almost self-critical way Spivak writes, “Postcolonialism remain[s] caught in mere nationalism against colonialism. Today it is planetarity that we are called to imagine—to displace this historical alibi, again and again” (81). This planetarity, as posited by Spivak, calls for a trans-disciplinary effort to speak to the needs of marginalized people across the world.

Along with Spivak, a number of postcolonial critics are searching for a way by which discourse can consider the current epoch. The concerns of radical postcolonial thinkers have begun to call the attention of other critics. In the most recent volume of *Race and Class*, Neil Lazarus claims, as I and others have, that “Postcolonial Theory has failed to situate colonialism relative to the wider framing history of capitalist development”(10). He goes on to further discuss what he calls the “Capitalist World System” and calls attention to, as one other scholar¹² notes, “Postcolonialism as a lubricant of Late Capitalism” (Lazarus 12). This look at twenty-first-century neocolonialism calls for active resistance. This kind of resistance is what has been

missing from postcolonial studies. Leela Gandhi notes that “in its current mood, postcolonial theory principally addressed the needs of the Western academy. It attempts to reform the intellectual and epistemological exclusions of this academy, and enables non-Western critics located in the West to present their cultural inheritance as knowledge (ix). Gandhi calls for postcolonial critics “to speak more adequately to the world it speaks for” (ix).

Here, in the crevice of this discussion, is precisely where we can begin to cull the necessary and tangible responses for the twenty-first century. This dissertation will explore how, by using the world of the imagination to look anew on the current reality, literary studies can use forms of analyses to precipitate avenues for change through an examination of Neo-anticolonial Refractions. The next chapter, “Neo-anticolonialism: An Approach for the 21st-century” will delineate the ways in which Neo-anticolonialism functions as a form of literary analysis, and, how a Neo-anticolonial praxis could function in the current era. Chapter three, “(Re)Traumatization of the Diaspora, A Legacy of Oppression” examines the work of Caribbean-born black British writer Caryl Phillips and considers how his novels *In the Falling Snow* and *Dancing in the Dark* engage the capitalist heredity of neo-colonialism and portrays a re-traumatization of the Black Diaspora that is reminiscent of that which was uncovered by the anti-colonialist Frantz Fanon. In chapter four, “Literary Evidence: Historical Fiction and the Story of Empire” I examine the novelization of the linked histories of oppression that are shaped by the relationship between global capitalism and the waging of wars. This chapter studies the Neo-anticolonial Refractions cast by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amitav Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace*. The fifth chapter, “True-True: New Narratives from the Diaspora” examines the literary depictions of economic and cultural hegemony through the works of Edward P. Jones and Michelle Cliff. In Jones’s *The Known World* and *All Aunt Hagar’s*

Children the depictions of a burgeoning black middle class offers Neo-anticolonial Refractions that speak to the current class divide in the United States, and Michelle Cliff's *Into the Interior* calls attention to the manipulation of discourse for the preservation of white supremacy. The concluding chapter, "Struggle for a New Global Order: Discourse and Activism as Catalysts for Revolution" considers how Neo-anticolonialism and the literary refractions can usher in a new space for twenty-first century activism in collaboration with, and as a form of, academic production.

2 NEO-ANTICOLONIALISM: AN APPROACH FOR THE 21ST-CENTURY

Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history; it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves.

Adrienne Rich¹³

Aijaz Ahmad, whose seminal text *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, has been described as “the controversial and acclaimed attack on the discourse of post-colonialism”¹⁴ has argued against, what he describes as, “the literary representation of colony and empire in Euro-American literary discourses” (62). Ahmad takes issue with the cultural production that emerges in academic spaces, and, more importantly, he warns against “the danger of embourgeoisement” whereby radical literary and political cultures are at risk of being “assimilated into the main currents of bourgeois culture” (65). He discusses the direction of the politically active Black radicals, feminists, and Third-Worldists toward and into institutions of higher education. Ahmad contends that “Radicalism had been, for most of them, a state of mind, brought about by an intellectual identification with the revolutionary wave that had gripped so much of the world when they were young; of the day-to-day drudgeries of, say, a political party or a trade union they had been (and were to remain) largely innocent”(66). These young academics, arguably, became the pillars of cultural production in Africana and Postcolonial Studies; there they would be relegated to the continued pressures of producing discourse.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore has noted that oppositional scholars, such as postcolonial critics and theorists, often occupy particular positions which can be counter-hegemonic. However, they do so without enacting meaningful and tangible change. The resulting oppositional scholarship, which, according to Gilmore, emphasizes “theory production at the cost of disconnection from

the larger movements of social change,” and often “hesitates to portray the marginalized in all its complexity” (71). Moreover, the theory production of the twentieth century is incapable of presenting a formidable challenge to the contemporary permutations of empire. My project emphasizes this as one of the reasons there is consistent evolution in the colonial enterprise—nearly free from any similarly consistent evolution of anti-colonial efforts. Neo-anticolonialism, as a counter-hegemonic approach, specifically aims to engage the twenty-first-century global order. It is a concept which can be applied and used in a wide array of academic disciplines, but more importantly, it is a concept that thrives on the coupling of academic discourse with praxis outside of academia. As Linda Tuhhiwahi Smith notes: “while the project of creating this literature is important, what indigenous activists would argue is that imperialism cannot be struggled over only at the level of text and literature. Imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself” (19). In much the same way, while the production of oppositional discourse is important, resistance cannot simply occur on the page. Neo-anticolonialism thus recognizes the power of the page and pen along with actual resistance on the ground. Charles R. Hale argues that “research and political engagement can be mutually enriching” (2). He further notes that “by naming and confronting the contradictions from the onset, we deflect the common objection that activist scholars seek reductive, politically instrumental truths at the expense of social complexity” (2). The idea that activism and scholarship are complementary and also critical to destabilizing hegemonic structures is at the heart of this project. Neo-anticolonialism has as its foundation the work of twentieth-century anti-colonialist activists such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, and it calls up their observations and arguments with a twenty-first century lens in order to shape new modes of resistance to the contemporary incarnations of empire.

In 1965, Jon Goldthorpe, reviewing Peter Worsely's *The Third World*, "regrettably" described Worsely's work as a production of "Neo-Anticolonialism" (51)¹⁵. Goldthorpe argued that the work was "polemical rather than analytical" and had a "preoccupation with politics" (51). He continued by stating that the Neo-anticolonialist view is "unhelpful" because it "merely harps on past wrongs" (52). My project challenges Goldthorpe's brief regrets and contends that bona fide Neo-anticolonialism is not relegated to so-called "unhelpful discourse", but instead has at its root the goal of coupling discourse with action in ways that are also forward-looking as it responds to the particular challenges of the twenty-first century. Thus, I offer the Neo-anticolonial paradigm, in part, as an answer to the emerging questions about what the postcolonial can *do* and as a response to the numerous calls for a new way to read beyond the postcolonial.¹⁶ This effort also arises out of my own need to participate in the effecting of change in my own sphere and my desire to link my work in academia with the work I hope to consistently engage outside of the immediate higher education setting. With this trajectory, I hold on to Césaire's argument that pre-colonial societies were ante- and anti-capitalist; and with this project I aim to also provide some treatment to the fractious relationship between anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism, in an effort to explore how Neo-anticolonialism unequivocally resists a complicity with twenty-first century capitalism.

2.1 Neo-anticolonialism as a Mode of Analysis

Unlike other oppositional or counter-hegemonic literary theories, Neo-anticolonialism is not just a way of reading texts, although this is the point from which I initially approach the concept. However, in my development of this paradigm that I have called Neo-anticolonialism, comes the affirmation that academics who approach Neo-anticolonialism first from their own disciplines will find greater continuity to their work outside of academe. Neo-anticolonialism

offers a particular response to twenty-first-century permutations of hegemony through its consideration of the genealogy of empire and, specifically, the expansion of global capitalism. As a form of literary analysis, Neo-anticolonialism is evinced in, what I have termed, a Neo-anticolonial Refraction. These refractions, as I have noted, occur in the twenty-first century fiction of several writers who engage the concerns of the twenty-first century whether they are writing about events that are current or from an earlier era. Moreover, the refractions can be seen in texts that speak beyond a singular context as they privilege discussions about global linkages between marginalized communities. The refractions, as I have examined and delineated them for this project,¹⁷ trace the capitalist heredity of neo-colonialism to reveal its twenty-first century mode, and more specifically: offer a view of linked histories of oppression and reveal how global oppression is connected and ultimately shaped by an evolving capitalism; they reveal the retraumatization of the African Diaspora by way of a generational legacy, and particularly in relation to access to capital and capitalist modes that engender cultural exploitation; they present re-visions and re-tellings of narratives and new, untold narratives from the Diaspora that reveal the reach of capitalism. Neo-anticolonial elements, I maintain, appear as refractions because, as refractions are responsible for, in optical terms, image formation by lenses and the eye, they improve visual acuity.¹⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines refraction as “The fact or phenomenon of a ray of light, heat, (†the sight), etc., being diverted or deflected from its previous course in passing obliquely out of one medium into another of different density, or in traversing a medium not of uniform density” or, more widely used, “change in direction of propagation of any wave as a result of its travelling at different speeds at different points along the wave front”.¹⁹ In other words, a light is shone into the eye and when the ray returns to the front of the eye it reveals the eye’s ability to see. This refraction is both a test of visual acuity

and the very process by which the examination occurs. In terms of the literary, the refraction functions in the same way within the space of a narrative that connects the past and the present. A rare or obsolete usage also presents refraction as “The action of breaking open or breaking up”.²⁰ Likewise, the Neo-anticolonial Refraction breaks open commonly held notions and changes the direction of a widely accepted idea to expose a fact or phenomenon that speaks to the oppression caused by the function of white supremacist imperial projects such as neocolonialism and globalization. This approach is, in part, a response to the call for, not only, new terms to re-define postcolonialism (or something beyond postcolonialism) in this historic moment, but also a movement to considering, specifically, the challenges and solutions of the twenty-first century. Thus the Neo-anticolonial Refraction has a prismatic function in which the interface of fiction and current reality offer a look which exposes linked oppression, as well as the possibilities for overcoming that domination.

Revealing the genealogy of neocolonialism, a close look at these connections uncovers how it emerges into a global phenomenon. In *Commonwealth*, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt consider what they call the “Metamorphosis of the Composition of Capital.” They argue that “Economic production is going through a period of transition in which increasingly the results of capitalist production are social relations and forms of life. Capitalist production, in other words, is becoming biopolitical” (133). This contemporary effect of capitalism is unique in its global reach and often mimics ideas of progress and egalitarianism. While Hardt and Negri warn against merely “inventing new tools for this new situation,” in favor of considering Marxist mechanisms, I contend that exploring new possibilities in cultural and political production opens the way for collaboration of interdisciplinary academic discourse and insurgent activism (131). As such, I offer Neo-anticolonialism, grounded on the foundation of work laid by twentieth-

century anticolonialists but responding to twenty-first-century challenges. The first aspect, which recognizes linked histories of oppression, reveals the ways in which the colonized participate in the buttressing of capitalist projects. It also recognizes the privileging of the underclass perspective, which often allows the gleaning of new information about the power dynamic, and it reveals instances of resistance that speak to current modes of oppression. Although the modes of oppression are performed and experienced in a variety of ways, they are linked by a broad and far-reaching neoimperial effort, including the perpetuation of global capitalism, the exercise of war, and exploitative nation-building. The exposing of traumas re-inflicted considers how the former victims of imperialism and colonization use the tools of oppression unsuccessfully, and it also considers the ways in which the power structure reenacts oppression or re-traumatizes the oppressed in contemporary ways to maintain power. The effort to shape re-visions and re-tell narratives is an intriguing challenge for writers and historians alike, and moves against the proliferation of neocolonial revisionism in which already whitewashed narratives of oppression are being revised to exculpate hegemonic structures. The Neo-anticolonial Refraction that presents this effort to re-vision and revise acknowledges the presence of more critical and veritable perspectives of empire and the existence of new and complex stories of the Diaspora. Most importantly, Neo-anticolonialism and its literary refractions open the possibility for a broad collaboration across fields of work and interest and a move in the direction of the coupling of academic discourse and practical work.

2.2 Neo-anticolonialism as Praxis

In contrast to the postcolonial projects and theories that antecede and buttress Neo-anticolonialism, this approach is distinct in a number of ways. It deals specifically with the neoimperialist exploits of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and it uses literature

of the twenty-first century to illustrate the possibilities for resistance. Calling on Spivak's concept of planetarity, which argues for inter- or trans-disciplinary approaches to study, Neo-anticolonialism goes a step further to propose an additional move beyond the academia and onto the grounds of insurgent resistance. Across numerous fields and in various places across the world, work is being done on this front to eradicate exploitation, abuse, and decimation of communities. There are a few writers whose work imagines the possibilities for this much-needed shift in the twenty-first century. The twenty-first-century literature of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Michelle Cliff, Amitav Ghosh, Edward P. Jones, and Caryl Phillips engage these issues, and Neo-anticolonial Refractions can be traced out in the ways that the works depict resistance and collaboration. There is much more to learn about how today's neocolonialism works to maintain oppression, and a collaboration of activists and academics, along with other allies, can form an effective fight against twenty-first-century injustices. The texts included in this study offer a new way of thinking and acting which, I contend, could offer examples of meaningful and actual change in the global arena.

Contemporary writers such as Amitav Ghosh and Caryl Phillips have often been described as transnational or cosmopolitan, and have even been positioned in the realm of hybridity along with authors such as Michelle Cliff. Increasingly, these designations arise out of a desire to situate the literature (and the authors, in some cases) in a comfortable space which reflects their ability to live in and write about numerous locales—a sort of global citizenship or multiple belonging. It might even emerge from the view that these writers call for a look at experiences shared on the world stage. While these ideas can render an optimistic approach, I contend that reading the literature of these authors as such overlooks the ways in which the texts, and, possibly, the authors, aim to present a caustic critique of empire. Along with Cliff, Ghosh,

and Phillips, writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Edward P. Jones give considerable treatment to empire-building, and their twenty-first century literature engages with globalization. More specifically, they emerge as the avant-garde to a new literary political action which, I argue, will be a critical function of twenty-first-century literature. Thus, the work, via the literary refractions revealed through a Neo-anticolonial reading, offers the possibility for something *beyond* mere caustic critique.

Adichie, Cliff, Ghosh, Jones, and Phillips offer texts which, in the very specific ways I have briefly mentioned, shed new light on issues of neocolonialism and empire in the twenty-first century. More importantly, their fiction engages with disciplines outside of the field of literary studies, and it calls for a critical engagement with politics, environmental concerns, the broad spectrum of human rights, and the ways in which these matters are shaped by global capitalism. I maintain that these works, published in the twenty-first century, bear a new lens from which we can form a stronger, more pointed resistance to neocolonialism than has been offered in the past century. The many efforts against today's neocolonialism function in a multiplicity of ways, and these Neo-anticolonial efforts are not meant to restrict the seeking-out and fighting of new forms of imperialism; and the refractions are in no way comprehensive. If we agree, after all, that the face and function of imperialism and colonialism has evolved and continues to evolve, then it would be right to say that Neo-anticolonialism should and will also evolve in order to combat the oppressive power structures. With this in mind, I hope to ultimately demarcate the ways Neo-anticolonialism presents possibilities for actual resistance outside of theory production. This move to fully understand and work against twenty-first-century neocolonialism, in its various forms, could potentially shift the field of Postcolonial Studies and other oppositional scholarship into a more active work which will span a range of

disciplines and practices, both inside and outside of the academy. This project modestly aims to impel such a shift, even as it bears in mind the precarious negotiation of the border between futile discourse production and the effectuating of a movement teeming with radical resistance. While fiction is certainly no substitute for sociological work, it should be noted that fictional narratives can often appear to reveal stories that might only emerge after years of sociological research. As such, the imagination that captures a lived experience is a useful medium for speaking to challenges of the current epoch. In that way, it would not be far-fetched for a literary scholar and teacher to engage his or her students in the real-life matters depicted on the page. Increasingly academic work includes an out-of-class experience directly linked to the community; and a Neo-anticolonial approach would require such academic-to-community activist work.

Of course, there has been long tradition of radical academics among African American intellectuals in the United States. There already exists a model, albeit one little explored and referenced in the larger (read white) academic circles. Cedric J. Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of the Radical Black Tradition* traces the centuries-old evidence of resistance among the African Diaspora in the Western Hemisphere. Robin D. G. Kelley, in his foreword²¹ to the recent edition, notes that Robinson's book "shifts the center of radical thought and revolution from Europe to the so-called 'periphery'—to the colonial territories, marginalized colored people of the metropolitan centers of capital, and those Frantz Fanon identified as the "wretched of the earth" (xii). *Black Marxism* is a capacious study that details, among other things, the social theories which emerged from the literary world. The chapter "Richard Wright and the Critique of Class Theory" includes a section entitled "The Novel as Politics." Here, Robinson focuses on the ways Wright's "novels were more than a complaint against or an observation of the human

condition” (291). He continues by rightly arguing that Wright “was a novelist who recognized that a part of his task was to come to terms with the character of social change and the agencies that emerged as attempts to direct that change” (291). In much the same way, the work of Neo-anticolonialism, first as a literary approach, should envision the work to create solutions to contemporary problems. In that way, a response to the systems by which the African Diaspora is re-traumatized might result in, for example, the abandoning of the capitalist music industry that effectively re-inscribes racist caricatures. The re-telling of narratives that expose the black middle class’ complicity with the white supremacist capitalist system could effect a revision in the way that local markets are operated in predominantly black neighborhoods and communities. Working with and under the guidance of local community members, experts (who, we might hope, are also members of that immediate community) in economics, social organization, education and literacy, to name a few, can collaborate to effect a change in the trajectory of the community policies and processes. While a detailed explication of Neo-anticolonialism in practice is beyond the immediate scope of this project, I wish to emphasize that the reality of such a venture is not unattainable. The twentieth-century saw Neo-anticolonial predecessors, whose work in literature and literary theory spoke to the unique challenges of their time and often engendered projects and community programs that responded to local needs.

2.3 Neo-Anticolonial Predecessors and Literature for the Sake of Activism

In an interview with the BBC, Razia Iqbal noted Caryl Phillips’ recent comment about wanting to change England. Phillips responded to Iqbal’s inquiry by confirming his desire to make an impact, saying “that’s exactly what I want to do and that’s what, I think, a lot of writers want to do. You want to change the ways in which people think about themselves and think about their society.”²² Phillips continued by speaking to the changing dynamic and race in

England: “Politicians completely flowed rather cynically over their responsibility to explain...those are the things that I think writers have a responsibility to explain”.²³ Here, Phillips is making reference to the racial strife that arose in England as a result of the white English not truly understanding why the face of England was changing—how the color of England was changing because of the empire. Phillips’s most recent collection of essays, *Color Me English*, engages the Anglophone African diaspora, but, and more importantly, it approaches a discussion of the current epoch; and Phillips notes that:

Europe is no longer white and never will be again...All of us are faced with a stark choice: we can rail against European evolution, or we can help to smooth its process. And, if we chose the latter, the first thing we must remind ourselves of is the lesson that great fiction teaches us as we sink into character and plot and suspend our disbelief: for a moment, ‘they’ are ‘us’. I believe passionately in the moral capacity of fiction to wrench us out of our ideological burrows and force us to engage with a world that is clumsily transforming itself...as long as we have literature as a bulwark against intolerance, and as a force for change, then we have a chance. (16)

Phillips’s position on the function of fiction speaks to the potential role of Neo-anticolonialism in the academy. More specifically, this literary stance is an effort to expose and explain hidden realities and catalyze positive outcomes. The need to set the record straight through writing is not a new one. Writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and Mahasweta Devi, are individuals whose lives and literary work can be seen as early models for Neo-anticolonialism.

Not only do they have a desire to write for the sake of resisting and informing, their work is directly linked to actions that effect change. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o utilized his own work in defiance to the legacy of the colonizer. Simon Gikandi, in his 2000 text, *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o*, described Ngũgĩ as “the disciple Marx and Fanon” (2). His study explores overlappings of Ngũgĩ’s fiction, critical work, ideology, political action, and the diverse contexts which shaped and continue to shape this Prisoner of Conscience.²⁴

Like Ngũgĩ, the Bengali writer and activist Mahasweta Devi can also be seen as a Neo-anticolonial predecessor. Her work with the Adivasi²⁵ of India is predominant in her fiction, and Gayatri Spivak, who translated Devi’s *Imaginary Maps* into English, suggests that the coupling of activism and resistance in the literary works might be of use to academic discourse, and arguably, practices outside of the Academy. In the “Translator’s Preface” Spivak argues that “Mahasweta’s fiction resonates with the possibility of constructing a new type of cultural worker” and she highlights her intentions to show “the difference between the literary text and the textile of activism” (*Imaginary Maps*, xxvi).

For decades, Mahasweta Devi, who has worked to promote the rights of the so-called denotified tribes such as the Shabars, Bawarias, Pardhis, Santals, and Kanjars (among others), has been involved in active resistance. She is engaged with those who Gayatri Spivak would identify as subaltern, and she works in opposition to crimes waged against those communities and their environment. Devi’s work is an early embodiment of the evolution from postcolonialism to Neo-anticolonialism, as she is not preoccupied with literary abstractions but rather with action and collaboration. While her work has spanned decades, much of which occurred in the late twentieth century, Devi can be seen as a predecessor of Neo-anticolonialism by virtue of the way she enacts resistance. The fact is that the buds of Neo-anticolonialists have sprung up along with

the evolution of hegemonic power, but because they were not as palatable as, for example, the postcolonial critic, they were not allowed a space to thrive. Devi's persistence, however, and her radical counter-hegemonic work is a model for Neo-anticolonialism. In addition to the three Neo-anticolonial Refractions discussed in this project, Devi's work also employs modes not examined here.

In a conversation with Spivak, Devi comments on the similar experiences of tribals (this term is still in common use by activists throughout India) and First Nations of the American continents. She is well-aware of the *linked histories of oppression* and it seems to drive her passion for justice. She refers to the "lack of information about Native Americans" noting that their legacy remains in the naming of places, and she is adamant that this will not happen to the Indian tribals (*Imaginary Maps* xi). Devi sees that much of the same forms of exploitation occur—the robbing of lands and resources, as well as the murdering of entire communities—at the hand of capitalism.

The launching of the Tribal Unity Forum was a way for Devi to help combat inter-tribal fighting while pressing mainstream India to "pay them the honor they deserve...pay them the respect that they deserve" (*Imaginary Maps* xvii). By doing so, she is limiting *trauma re-inflicted*, whereby tribals will not perpetuate crimes against each other—crimes which resemble those inflicted by, first, English colonizers and eventually Indian nationals. Devi's social and political efforts work alongside her journalistic and fictional writing. Indeed, she speaks out via the media when there needs to be a public outcry for the tribal communities. Her fictional work also moves to revise the established narrative. Her *re-visioning and re-telling* replaces the "criminal tribal" narrative with stories that reveal the suffering, degradation, and false criminalization of those communities and people. One has only to read her short story "The

Hunt” to see how the greed of the mainstream leads to exploitation of the tribals. As Devi notes, crimes against tribals are not taken up by local authorities, and so it is appropriate for Mary Oraon, protagonist of “The Hunt,” to “[deal] out justice for a crime committed against the entire tribal society” (xviii). Mary Oraon redresses the rape of her mother and other tribal women by killing Tehsildar—not only for his advances on her, but also for his raping the forest of Sal trees.

Exploitation of, and sexual violence against, women are consistent features of Devi’s stories. *Sexuality and gender liberation* is at the heart of her work. Spivak, who has translated many of Devi’s stories, has said that she looks for women writers who are cognizant of these matters (xxii). Narratives such as “Douloti the Bountiful” and “Breast-Giver” are resounding indictments of crimes against women where various elements and levels of society are responsible. In fact, Devi has said that she ended the story of Douloti with the woman’s “bleeding, rotting carcass cover[ing] the entire Indian peninsula” as a way to call attention to the exploitation of women (*Imaginary Maps* xx).

While Devi’s consideration of women permeates every text, there is no pervasive literary treatment of *contemporary theological and faith-based activism*, a Neo-anticolonial Refraction not fully explored but briefly discussed later on. She does portray the struggles of faith and social constraints, for instance, in the way that Mary Oraon is treated for wanting to marry Jalim who is Muslim; she also points to the loss of tribal belief systems in a number of stories like “Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha,” for example. In the vein of Neo-anticolonialism, however, Devi’s own life is a reflection of contemporary theological and faith-based activism. That she, a woman born to a Hindu Brahmin family, would defy societal norms in her work with those viewed as belonging to the margins or sub-groups, illustrates the reach of her activism in this regard. Furthermore, Devi works to ensure that there is access to knowledge and

information for the tribal communities through literacy movements and the development of schools. More importantly, in all her modes of resistance, Devi is in constant *collaboration* with activists in other disciplines and fields of work. Her pursuits with Spivak are most present in the U.S. and British realm, but within her country, Devi's numerous collaborations with people in the public sector, and governmental and international agencies (although she is extremely clear about autonomy here) speak to her efforts to engage all levels and avenues of eradicating systemic oppression. Along with her work in journalism and reporting, Devi also founded India's first bonded-labor organization to fight the heinous modern-day slavery which occurs throughout the subcontinent. Devi's accomplishments are a testament to the multifaceted approach she takes in order to disrupt injustice and eliminate neocolonial and neoimperial projects in India. Devi's work in total, with all its various components, is a model for Neo-anticolonialism.

Along with Mahasweta Devi and Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon stood as individuals whose scholarly and creative work was directly enmeshed with revolution and the fight for freedom. It is widely known that Fanon, after experiencing racist French-run systems in North Africa, resigned his position, renounced his French citizenship, and became a revolutionary for anti-racist and anti-colonial movements. Nigel Gibson notes that Fanon "tried, with limited success, to put some of his radical ideas about hospital reform into practice" (*Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* 5). In addition to joining the revolutionary movements and working as editor of *El Moudjahid*, Fanon went on to write and publish texts that directly addressed the changing times and struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism. *Wretched of the Earth*, *Toward the African Revolution*, and *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* all forcefully engaged the problems of colonization and the harmful remnants of decolonization. Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* continues to be a hallmark text of counter-hegemonic work,

but his poetry—revolutionary poetics—also functions as the literary bloodline of his anticolonial efforts. The histories and legacies of these parents of Neo-anticolonialism suggest a harmony and an obligation in the bridging of literary work and the on-going fight for justice and equality.

While they could not have directly engaged what was to become twenty-first century capitalism in the moments they produced their landmark texts, their efforts to enact a radical struggle to the challenges of their respective eras stand as prototypical academic insurgency and resistance.

3 (RE)TRAUMATIZATION OF THE DIASPORA, A LEGACY OF OPPRESSION

It is not by accident that his skin is black; for black, too, is the color of his loss.

George Lamming²⁶

In the work of Caryl Phillips, the black Kittian-born British writer now residing in the United States, there are worlds occupied by lives fraught with the legacy of the colonial enterprise. However, and more importantly, these novelistic representations expose the conditions of the current epoch through a Neo-anticolonial frame. Phillips's twenty-first-century oeuvre engages the capitalist heredity of neo-colonialism and traces the evolution of capitalism, and specifically, as this chapter will delineate, in terms of a twenty-first-century permutation in the form of a re-traumatization of the Black Diaspora. Phillips's work employs other modes of Neo-anticolonialism such as the portrayal of linked histories of oppression and the re-envisioning and retelling of narratives, however, for the purpose of this chapter, I will map out the experiences of re-traumatization and continue the examination of Diasporic Black writers via the lens of Neo-anticolonialism and through an analysis of the Neo-anticolonial Refractions²⁷ traced in the texts. Again, Neo-anticolonialism, as marked in literature, occurs as a Neo-anticolonial Refraction. This refraction is a gazing back—the shining of a narrative light back onto the past epoch—to cast an image on the current one—and particularly in a way that results in a critique of contemporary hegemonic structures as they relate to the economy or access to capital.

Phillips's work has garnered a significant amount of attention, and numerous articles have dealt with his depiction of trauma, exile, and the experience of the diaspora. Before furthering my look at Phillips's contemporary work, a discussion of extant scholarship on this diasporan writer is useful. To date, there are six book-length studies on Phillips's work, most notably Bénédicte Ledent's 2002 monograph *Caryl Phillips*. This, the first full-length study

examines Phillips's early fiction, including and up to the much-acclaimed 1997 novel *The Nature of Blood*. Ledent's thorough study offers a look at the author's engagement with diaspora and identity and belonging, and her textual analysis presents an initial look at displacement and dislocation, a theme that would later become a marker of Phillipsian writing. Ledent, along with Daria Tunca, has produced the most recent study of Phillips in the edited collection, *Caryl Phillips: Writing in the Key of Life*. Arranged thematically, the collection culls a wide breadth of scholarship by the most notable Phillips scholars, and the book offers a look at the later works and includes two recent pieces by the author himself.

Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund's *Mobility at Large: Globalization, Textuality, and Innovative Travel Writing* include a comparative chapter focused on the travel writing of Amitav Ghosh and Phillips. Like many other scholarly works on Phillips, this text investigates what its authors see as "a non-European itinerary and ontology" which move against Eurocentric conventions (49). Helen Thomas's brief study considers the trauma of the diasporan experience as depicted in Phillips's play *Strange Fruit* and his early novels and non-fiction. Thomas argues that:

...Phillips's representation of the black diaspora emphasizes not only the correlation between past, present and future, but the simultaneous processes of loss and recovery necessary for visionary transformation...therefore, memory, and thus recovery of past events, is a fragile yet fundamental process by which a sense of continuity and radical agency can be maintained amidst a historical 'landscape' of cultural trauma, suffering and loss. (*Caryl Phillips* 84)

Thomas's assertions are also taken up in Abigail Ward's chapter on Phillips,²⁸ as well as in numerous articles and dissertations on Phillips's work and Renée Schatteman's recent collection of interviews, *Conversations with Caryl Phillips*. Indeed, Phillips's oeuvre is veined by experiences of trauma, but I contend that his twenty-first century work is marked by an exploration of re-traumatization specific to the expansion of empire in the current epoch.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon considered the moments of trauma engendered by contact with the white world, and his efforts to layout and understand the disalienation of the Black man firmly roots Fanon's legacy of scholarship and activism in Neo-anticolonial literature, particularly the work of Caryl Phillips, Caribbean-born British writer. The work of Caryl Phillips, in many ways, calls for a twenty-first-century literary discussion of Fanon's ideas about the black man and his interaction with whites and with the colonizing nation. Phillips's engagement of the legacy of empire is evident in his fiction, but he also spoke openly about this preoccupation: "I've seen how this experiment of empire has affected people's lives, their ability to earn a living, how they think of themselves, how they think of their country, how they think of the world, obviously how they think of Britain. This has been a large part of my life for the last 20 years as a writer and a traveller observing the residue of empire".²⁹ Neo-anticolonialism directly addresses this "residue of empire," and, in doing so, specifically builds on the anticolonial foundation laid by Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon.

Fanon's work resonates in this era as it is a time rife with questions about race, identity, place, and the sense of dislocation that comes from occupying multiple cultures at once in a world of globalizing economy and culture. Still, I do not intend to merely reduce Fanon to a new trend of interpretation—a move which Matthieu Renault argues is the trajectory of postcolonial critique.³⁰ Conversely, I move to "[engage] Fanon's thought as a constant process of asking

political questions—a process that finds our age wanting” (Gibson 8). In particular, there are questions about the experience of the black man in the twenty-first century, especially in regards to his economic standing and power (or lack thereof). While much scholarship has been dedicated to engaging *Black Skin, White Masks*, and in particular, its treatment of the violence against the black man’s psyche upon the exposure to the white world, there is still a lot to be gleaned from looking at Fanon with a twenty-first-century lens.³¹ The questions which launch from the path forged by Fanon lead us to a twenty-first-century reality where Neo-anticolonialism can offer a direction towards a new understanding and resistance. I contend that the literary refractions in Phillips’s twenty-first-century work show that it is not merely the initial exposure and realization of self as black man, as in the case of *Black Skin, White Masks*, but more importantly the denial of access to capital and the sustained subjugation that comes with the “Lived Experience,” that results in trauma. Alice Cherki, in “Fanon, Fifty Years Later: Resisting the Air of Our Present Time,” speaks to the continued relevance of Fanonian ideas: “Reading Fanon helps us to ‘resist the air of our present time’ in the fields of politics, culture, and individual becoming” (132). She goes on to speak to the ideological force of the current era—one that is governed by the power of money—when she states “This ideology can be characterized by financial capital, corruption, subjection of the impoverished, and a culture of fearing the other...securing an atmosphere for hegemonic, repressive, and violent statements” (Cherki 133). Indeed, Fanon directly presented us with his position in this regard, at least in the twentieth-century context. Of his study in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon says:

The analysis we are undertaking is psychological. It remains, nevertheless, evident that for us the true disalienation of the black man implies a brutal awareness of the social and economic

realities. The inferiority complex can be ascribed to a double process: First, economic. Then, internalization or rather epidemalization of this inferiority. (xiv-xv)

This economic disenfranchisement is what ultimately begins the alienation of the black man, and Phillips' *In the Falling Snow* captures the evolution of that ordeal from the colonial space to the center of empire. In his seminal work Fanon stated, “[s]ince I was born in the Antilles, my observations and my conclusions are valid only for the Antilles at least concerning the black man on his home territory” (16). It is arguable, however, that Fanon’s ideas, particularly in the chapters entitled “The Black Man and Psychopathology” and “The Lived Experience of the Black Man,” are useful for understanding the experience of Afro-Caribbean men abroad—or rather—outside of the Antillean space. The hubs of migration, like New York and London, can be seen as extensions of the colonial spaces because of the proliferation of Caribbean people and the expanding Caribbean enclaves. As such, there are numerous opportunities for the traumatization and re-traumatization of the colonial or former colonial subject. E. Ann Kaplan argues that “In such experiences [of trauma], people lose touch with links to other humans, and to the sense of community or group so basic to human identity” (146). She goes on to state that “Trauma is usually experienced in the form of images in a flashback or a nightmare, accompanied by painful bodily sensations” (146-147). This is made evident in the lives of Phillips’s characters, and, in particular, through the violence against each figure’s psyche and the very tangible manifestations of that trauma in their daily experiences. Phillips’s depicting of this experience is uniquely Neo-anticolonial in that the portrayal forces a look back and draws a direct relationship between the early twentieth century decolonization period and the capitalist thread that pulls through and into the twenty-first century. The Neo-anticolonial

Refractions that occur in Phillips's novel, again, rest on an anticolonial foundation. Alice Cherki notes that Fanon's work asserts that "the physical consequences of the violence of colonial history and the silence that surrounds them are driven back from generation to generation" (134). She continues by stating that "the traumas and the destruction of all references and genealogies make up a great part of current generation's psychological disorders" (134). The texts' portrayal of the current generation engages the capitalist heredity of neo-colonialism and traces the evolution of capitalism from the twentieth century to reveal its twenty-first-century permutations and the current implications of that transformation. Moreover, as is characteristic of Neo-anticolonial texts, Phillips's novels chronicle the evolution of capitalism even as it portrays the emergence of subtle and burgeoning resistance. I maintain that this evidence of struggle, and the literature itself as opposition, evokes the anticolonial discourse and activism which led to decolonization movements in the mid-twentieth-century—a sort of poetics of anticolonialism as discussed by Robin D. G. Kelley in the recent introduction to *Discourse on Colonialism*³². This tradition, also central to the work of Fanon, is intentional about locating the history of empire as a place of violence and trauma for the colonial subject. Alice Cherki, as she calls attention to the current emerging political critique based on Fanon's works, notes that "one less known aspect of his work [is] the relationship between trauma and history, which creates a stasis in the human psyche from one generation to another" (133). This chapter, following a similar development and inquiry, will first investigate the ways in which Phillips's work exposes the contemporary implications of the capitalist heredity of neo-colonialism, revealing its continued and sustained traumatization of the colonial subject and his progeny. This is especially clear in his most recent novel, *In the Falling Snow*, where we also see the rhetoric and policy of multicultural awareness, what Jodi Melamed criticizes as neoliberalism's manipulation of "an idea of the ethic of

multiculturalism,” function to mime inclusion as a pacifier. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri also decry this “imperial racism” and its efforts to “[co-opt and enlist its arguments]” (*Empire* 190). The second section of the chapter will explore Phillips’s novel *Dancing in the Dark* and the relationship of racial caricature in the early twentieth-century economy of entertainment. This inquiry considers *Dancing in the Dark*, in its entirety, as a Neo-anticolonial Refraction which speaks to a distinctly racist and (re)traumatizing culture of performance in the twenty-first century.

3.1 Passages: Lessons from the Shores of England

Caryl Phillips’s novel *In the Falling Snow* depicts the story of four generations of black men whose lives, in one way or another, are shaped by the British Empire. Initially, we meet Keith, the successful son of Caribbean immigrants. We see his life unraveling as he grapples with difficulties in his job as a social worker supervising London’s Race Equality office, as well as with his relationships with his son, father, and the women in his life. Phillips portrays the generational legacy of racism in England, but more importantly, he shows the trauma that is inflicted and re-inflicted when race prejudice is compounded with capitalism. This neo-anticolonial approach is grounded in the anticolonial thought of Aimé Césaire and also echoes contemporary discussions about the figurations of race and capitalism. Césaire, in *Discourse on Colonialism*, talked about the “natural economies” of indigenous communities, and he argues that these communities “were not only ante-capitalist...but also *anti-capitalist*” (43-44). This progenitor to Neo-anticolonialism declared that the so-called civilizing mission of the colonizer was more importantly an exploitative capitalist project. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s numerous studies explore contemporary figurations of empire and the many ways that capitalism and racism have a synchronic function. Through reflections on the effects of early twentieth-

century imperialism and its evolution into the twenty-first century, Phillips reveals the capitalist vein of oppression that runs through multiple locales, from former colony to imperial center, and through multiple eras. The novel begins in the twenty-first century with a middle-aged Keith tangled in an affair with a younger colleague. Phillips chronicles the very mundane happenings of his life and suggests that Keith is shrouded in a type of vapidness that exacerbates his disconnection from others. We see Keith surrounded by twenty-first century issues and objects: vulgar and disrespectful teens on the tube; iPods and Google; school bullies; sexual harassment charges. Yet, there is a hollowness to his life that is not reconciled with his seemingly successful career until we meet his immigrant father Earl and Keith's biracial son Laurie.

Phillips, as a part of the cadre of twenty-first-century writers examined in this study, presents a narrative that captures the concept of Neo-anticolonialism precisely through his depiction of Keith's legacy. Furthermore, elements of the story allow us to probe ideas about the contemporary modes of resistance to empire. Keith, as a social worker, is engaged with the community, but it is his effort to listen to the community and a desire to capture those stories which lead him to a more meaningful future. First, however, he has to face the brutal reality of being a black man in Britain. This reality is somehow bequeathed by Keith's father, and by that generation of men who came to England from the Caribbean in the time of the *SS Windrush*.³³

3.2 Sons of Empire

While Keith's narrative and perspective dominate the story, his father Earl's experience, which is shared in less than a quarter of the text, arguably anchors the novel. Among Earl's friends we meet the group of new arrivals from the Caribbean who experience the trauma of initial contact and then there is the group of offspring whose negotiation of the British home embodies Fanon's ideas about the psychopathology of the black man. Fanon questions, in *Black*

Skin, White Masks, the trauma that occurs outside of contact with the white world. While his line of questions pertains to the twentieth century, there is something to be gained from this interrogation: “Has the young black child seen his father beaten or lynched by the white man? Has there been a real traumatism?” (124). In the Neo-anticolonial framework, this contemplation of the generational effect produced by an initial trauma is precisely what creates the Neo-anticolonial Refraction, and the lives of Phillips’s characters offer us a look at this trauma and subsequent re-traumatization as a result of the compounded factors of race and capital.

Earl’s initial contact with England shatters his dream of a British life. Unlike, Fanon’s Antillean men who encounter their race upon arriving in the metropole, Phillips’s character Earl seems already aware of his race as black when he arrives. Yet, there is still a confrontation with race which sends Earl spiraling into mental illness. His hopes for a life lie, not in placing himself culturally in British society, but rather in the prospects of economic advancement and higher education. However, his seeing the dirty white men at the dock, when his ship pulls in to England, makes it clear to him that he will not be able to make it if there are white men suffering. Thus, it is a more nuanced Fanonian experience. Earl is aware of his blackness and he is also aware that this England—the land of the “ramrod straight” white men on his island home—has a good deal of promise, but it is his realization and viewing of white Brits in squalor that leaves him knowing and having a clear understanding of the hierarchy of race. This speaks directly to the compounded effect of race and class. Earl recognizes that there is a class of whites who have no access to wealth, and already fully understanding his subordinate position as black man, he also realizes that there will be severe constraints on his efforts. This moment in the novel is grounded in Neo-anticolonialism as it presents the fact of capitalism as a refraction in which

Earl's gazing back stimulates an image that draws attention to the present condition. Earl tells his son:

But even before I get off the boat England deliver a big shock to my system. Looking down from the deck I see plenty of white men in dirty clothes hurrying this way and that way up and down the dock, pushing wheelbarrows, and spitting on the ground and shouting at each other. These people don't look like the type of white men I used to seeing back home wearing club blazer and tie and walking about the place ramrod straight. Jesus Christ, I don't know England have such poor white men. (252)

It is clear that Earl already has a sense of himself as black. It is not the arrival that thrusts his blackness upon him. But rather, it is a new awareness that his blackness precludes him from getting access to advantages, finances, or a job. He goes on to say, "I feel cold invading my body like it don't care if it throw me down and finish me off right there and then on day number one, so even before I get off the damn boat England punishing my mind and my body and teaching me a hard lesson about what kind of place it is" (252). Indeed, it is a hard place for Earl. His living-conditions are poor, at times he has no power over the little money he has, and he finds that the halls of academia are not only closed to him, but that he is also considered a specimen there.³⁴ Earl certainly experiences being an outsider, but unlike Fanon's argument that "the black man on his home territory is oblivious of the moment when his inferiority is determined by the Other" it seems that Earl, a British subject, is well aware of his being different, and had also, in a moment, perceived this difference on his island home (90). Again, the matter for economics is presented. Earl recalls being a young boy on the island and being

aware of the divide between the class of boys who can afford lessons to prepare for the scholarship exam and those like him who do not:

The island have only one scholarship for studying overseas at university and at least six boys in my class have parents who can pay for extra lessons, and all of these boys have new textbooks. Even if I study all day and night and don't bother with sleep I still can't catch these boys, but my mother don't believe this. (260)

So his education about self begins in the colony but when he arrives in England—with his British passport and his belief that entrance into this white world will afford him the right to study—he ultimately sees the reality of his non-Britishness. Earl reflects on his arrival to England and tells Keith about two former RAF Trinidadians on the ship. They attempt to tell Earl, and others on the ship, all about England and English people:

...everywhere you turn you always looking at a sea of white faces and they don't know nothing about you, or where you from, or who you be, and they don't know the difference between a Jamaican and a Bajan, or where is this West Indian Island...so while you know everything about them, daffodil, king this and queen that, poet and lyrical feeling and so forth, Sherlock Holmes, Noel Coward...castle and tower, Robin Hood, Lord Nelson, whatever question they care to test you on you have England under control, but the truth is most of these people don't know a blasted thing about themselves so every question pointing at you but if you

want to shame them you just turn it round and ask them about themselves... (253)

Earl's memory of his day of arrival speaks to his colonial education and his identity under the British Empire. That story was also his—it was also a way that he understood himself. It is upon his arrival at the center of Empire that he realizes that he has no claim to that history, even though his experience is at its heart. The irony of not “[having] England under control is not to be missed here. The idea of England—the exported and packaged knowledge of England is what Earl and his peers have under control. The real England would evade their grasp and the men would later be pummeled by its reality. Later, when Earl is ill, his friend Baron laments their English existence, saying to Keith, “Look at us. The Sons of Empire. The men who came to this country to make life better for ourselves. What have we got to be proud about, aside from the fact that we're still alive?” (184). Earl, Baron, and their peers exist in a state of tragic irony. While they entered England with British passports, even bearing names that are reminiscent of English aristocracy, they remain excluded from society. The trauma of this exclusion repeats and endures and shapes the entirety of their lives. Phillips's twenty-first-century reflection on the black man's encounter with Europe engages Fanon's concepts on the psychological effects of racism, but the measured depiction of Earl reveals the compounded effect of racist capitalism on his experience. He reflects on his first attempts at working in England, and he tells Keith:

...I already know the truth is they just can't tolerate being so close to a coloured man but they will take us as a last resort if no Englishman will work for such low wages...and I looking hard at the English man and remembering what Ralph tell me about these union men who like to talk about the importance of the empire, and

everything is brother this and brother that, and I only been in England for a few weeks but already I have to leave two jobs because these people like to trouble your mind because in one breath they talking all this brother foolishness with a smile, and with the same smile they tell you it is better if you only bring English food to eat at break because some people don't appreciate foreign muck... (275-276)

Earl not only experiences hostility that would drive him out of the workforce, he is also at risk of enduring violence on the street and in social settings. Even when we see the aged Earl and his peers at the Mandela center and home, there is a clear sense that these men have been excluded from the market. Keith accompanies his father to help the residents fill out forms for pension cards, bus passes, and social security. Keith "sits with Baron, who has no idea what to do with the tax exemption form that he has filled in as best as he can. He takes the pen from the older man and quickly checks the right boxes" (183). This moment is very telling in a number of ways. Phillips presents Keith as having the skills to negotiate when it comes to financial matters. In the moment that Keith takes the pen from his father's friend, we see that the older generation is incapable of arbitrating, presumably because they have never been allowed authority over and entry into these packets of their lives.

Keith, on the other hand, has access and can negotiate his home country. He is aware of his difference and the constraints faced by black men in Britain. However, he is, in many ways blinded by his Britishness, and by the rhetoric of equality and progressiveness that drives his work; and he is not able to recognize this until Earl shares his tragic life's story. In fact, we see Keith's view of England's shores more markedly different than his father's view upon entry.

After his second year at university, Keith and his ex-wife, then girlfriend, Annabelle went “Inter-Railing” through Europe (210). Keith laments having to return to England with its color prejudice, and as the ferry went from “Boulogne back across the Channel towards Dover,” Keith says that he “didn’t feel like [he] had any reason to come back to England, aside from the degree that is” (211). Firstly, Keith’s trip to England is in fact a return, so he does not experience the shock of initial arrival. In some ways, England already belongs to him and his British passport carries more weight than his father’s did. Secondly, his return is colored by options. Unlike Earl who left the Caribbean to make a better life, Keith returns to a university education that will prepare him to participate, to some extent, in the capitalist structure. His return to England, a journey between two European shores, is reminiscent of Earl’s arrival, in that both father and son stand on deck of a vessel looking out to the shore. The difference is that Keith expects hostility, albeit (and probably naively) from his wife’s parents and not necessarily from the ruling English systems. We are told, “I just keep watching England come closer and closer, and I kind of knew that it was going to get bad with your parents, but what could we do?” (211). Keith’s preparation for the return to a racist England in many ways limits his sight of England. While Earl is immediately able to realize the disparity and economic constraints, Keith only has a sense of racism as perpetuated by individuals as opposed to a structural problem. This parallel of the father and son is a function of the Neo-anticolonial Refraction, in that it reveals Keith’s naïve view of twenty-first-century oppression as being linked to individuals even as the text illustrates how it is, in fact, a systemic operation. Moreover, Keith’s career as a social worker focusing on issues of multiculturalism further presents him as unknowingly functioning as a spoke on the wheel of twenty-first-century world-system. Hardt and Negri call attention to this “imperial racism” in which “racism has not receded but actually progressed in the contemporary world,

both in extent and intensity...because its form and strategies have changed” (191). It emerges as a twenty-first-century discourse and multicultural rhetoric that attempts to mitigate systemic institutional practices of racial and economic hierarchy. Jodi Melamed describes it in the U.S. American context as a “Neoliberal Multiculturalism” which “seeks to manage racial contradictions on a national and international scale for U.S.-led neoliberalism” (13). It is arguable that the U.S. neoliberalism which emerged, occurred, and worked in conjunction with British neo-liberalism (the familiar Reagan/Thatcher efforts) is precisely what led to the situation of Keith in his current role as administrator of diversity matters. His job serves to appeal to the society that wishes to see formal efforts to address the issues of inequality, and in effect, “sutures official anti-racism to state policy in a manner that hinders the calling into question of global capitalism” and “it produces new privileged and stigmatized forms of humanity” (Melamed 14). However, the interaction with his father Earl offers Keith a perspective that links contemporary problems and ambivalences with the evolution of empire. It is through his father’s death-bed stories that Keith comes to learn the real history of early twentieth-century life for black men in England, and Phillips offers another generational parallel between the men in this family. While we do not see the character fully engage the reality, the Neo-anticolonial Refraction is clear for the reader to see. The contemporary space and the rhetoric of equality espoused, particularly through Keith’s role, is juxtaposed with the reality of Earl’s life and creates a refraction that reveals that the early workings of empire persist, albeit in a new form, to continue the traumatization of the Black man who functions in opposition to the very system.

The deep crevices between Earl and Keith also exist between Laurie and Keith, and Phillips leaves a certain degree of uncertainty about the future of these men’s lives as father and son. While I do not suggest that this should be read as a complete failure, neither do I argue that

there is a possibility for positive outcomes. Rather, I would contend that the ambiguity we are left with in the text serves to produce another Neo-anticolonial Refraction about the re-traumatization of the men. Phillips, in *A New World Order*, speaks to this somewhat in his concluding chapter “The ‘High Anxiety’ of Belonging”: “History has taught me that for people such as myself the rules will change...the goalposts will be moved...For people such as myself, the complex troubled history of Britain suggests vigilance” (309). The Neo-anticolonial frame, illuminating the link between Earl’s capitalist subjugation and his frayed relationship with his son, and Keith’s lack of awareness of his own son, suggests that they have not yet realized the need for vigilance—that the thread of empire enacts an irreversible trauma on the lives of these black men.

3.3 The Black Man at Home

Phillips’s text draws a direct link from the height of empire to the twenty-first century. In many ways, the text is overtly Neo-anticolonial as it depicts the contemporary challenges and consequences of twentieth-century empire. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon explores the experience of the “black man on his home territory” and considers how his identity is defined at home and abroad. Phillips’s novel engages this discussion, but the text complicates this approach further by portraying the black man’s home outside of the Antillean space. *In the Falling Snow* presents England as a perverted Caribbean annex where many men attempt to make a home, even temporarily. However, the trauma of the first arrival is coupled with sustained injustices and the re-inflicting of trauma against these “Sons of Empire,” and the new home-space becomes a site of re-traumatization. Phillips’s portrayal of Earl, Baron, and Ralph, through the lens of Keith’s life as a son and father, calls us to look at the current state of British society which is plagued by post-Thatcher new conservatism (driven by Melamed’s neoliberal Multiculturalism)

which includes overt racist policies, decline of social services, expansion of wealth and tax leniency for supranational corporations. The senior characters consider their lives in Britain and lament the years spent in the throes of the empire. Again, this gazing back produces a refraction, which is, at times, very personal even as it announces a larger societal problem. Baron asks Keith, “When your mother and father come to this country, you really think that either one of them expect to die here?” (184). His question suggests that Keith’s parents went to England for opportunity and not necessarily to make a permanent life. However, their time in the country was so distressed that they lacked the resources to return to their former lives. Thus England becomes home as they are superficially rooted in society, and more importantly, they are rooted in an underclass position in which they can be easily ripped from the soil of Britishness. English society debased their very existence, and Phillips presents this re-infliction of trauma in a number of ways. First, the idea of home or the physical home space is presented as unsafe or unhealthy, and there is a sense of decay and displacement that follows the older generation. When we meet Earl, Keith notices that “the house smells as though it hasn’t been cleaned or aired in a long while” (163). All around the home Keith observes dilapidation and disarray:

As he was doing the washing-up he noticed mouse droppings on the kitchen counter top. He cleaned them up with a paper towel and then rinsed and dried his hands before yanking open the fridge door, where he was greeted by half-eaten plates of food that had long been abandoned, and rancid packets of cheese and butter that had passed their sell-by dates. (165)

The state of Earl’s home reflects the condition of his life in England, and even the portrayal of the physical space is a Neo-anticolonial Refraction. The current putridness is a

consequence of the years of trauma, and we see the condition as directly linked to initial arrival when it is juxtaposed with the filth in which the young Earl and Ralph initially exist. In addition to the decaying home, Earl's presence in the country is accompanied by ill mental health, and he often speaks of the headache or "the hurting in my head" that returns when he is faced with the reality of his state of unbelonging in England (254). E. Ann Kaplan emphasized the pain of trauma and here we also see the persistent pain also function as a Neo-anticolonial Refraction. Furthermore, Earl and his peers endure extreme racist violence which leaves them with mental anguish and even death, as in Ralph's case.

When Earl arrives in England and meets his friend in what appears to be the only pub for West Indians, the realization he came to at the dock, that black men will be relegated to a more difficult life even as poor white men walk around and work in filth—much unlike the jacketed white men of his island home—is confirmed. First, the white taxi driver refuses to give him his six pence change, and then he is greeted by Ralph's disheveled appearance and later by his squalid flat. The land of abundance, the center of the empire, has no promises for him. Earl remembers "I look around and I see dirty clothes drape everywhere, and unwashed cups and plates on the floor, and an empty bedpan in the middle of the room, and I surprised to find my friend living like this" (273). Later on we learn that Caribbean immigrants lived in a state of near-total exclusion. Their access to homes and rental flats was restricted to slums, which resulted in the ghettoization of an entire community of mainly men. This type of Neo-anticolonial Refraction is persistent in Phillips's novel; repeatedly, he presents the trauma of the twentieth-century as having a direct offspring in the twenty-first century. His characters remain isolated and poor. Yet, with a menial job and substandard living condition, Earl continued to envision his future being built on a foundation of education. When he visits the university

seeking admittance, the lecturer ignores his inquiries about the entrance exams and instead questions Earl about his emigration. Continuing to ignore Earl's appeals, the lecturer, Dr. Davies, says "You're all so bloody young. Remarkable really, but you're all just kids when it comes down to it, just kids" (279). The lecturer's observations and lack of consideration for the man sitting before him continue to speak to the lack of opportunity and inability to build capital, even wealth, in the society. This shutting-out of the academy experienced by the majority of the immigrant population is later depicted in the life of Earl's grandson Laurie. Keith and Annabelle meet with the headmaster of their son's school, and the man suggests that Laurie's choices and behavior will prevent him from going to university. His condescending tone and his references to "the cultural cachet of the ethnic way of life" expose him as a participant in the very institution that limited Earl some years before (221).

This new home, England, also discharges brutal violence and the characters continue to endure cruelty well after their initial arrival. Like the lecturer, Dr. Davies, many see these Caribbean men as boys. Even white youth disregard and, conversely, harass these black men. Ralph annoys his peers by talking about "what he will do the next teenager who try to push him off the pavement" (281). We have repeated references, and evidence in the form of facial bruises, about the brutality of white British boys towards these young immigrants. Often, the violence is directly related to the black men's relationships (or even their perceived relationships) with white women. We are told that Ralph is beaten by a boy whose sister he had been seeing. The constant hostility prevents the men from normal societal interactions. Coupled with the economic limits, not having proper social spaces, homes, and thus the inability to bring family the trauma of social exclusion drives Ralph to self-abasement. He encourages Earl to go with him in search of

prostitutes. Earl remembers the night's incidents leading up to the beating that results in Ralph's death:

Ralph start to carry on bad and he encouraging me to do the same. I press up even harder against the girl, like I trying to drive her into the tree, and as I do so she reach down and open up her coat a little wider, and then her legs, and then the girl begin to liven up her cold performance and start to maul me like she must think I'm her pet monkey. She whisper crude things to my ear but I know she just want me to finish quickly so she can be on her way. Eventually I peel away from the girl who quickly close up her coat and ask me if everything is all right, but a part of me want to laugh because how can everything be all right if I leaning up against a tree in a park with a young girl to whom I just pay cash money in exchange for a few minutes with her body? Everything is not all right and, although this is the third time that Ralph sweet-talk me into coming to the park with him and looking for skirt, I already know that I won't be troubling with this type of business no more for it's no good for a man like me. (283)

The social exclusion that drives Ralph and Earl to pay for sexual relations in a park also delivers the retribution for this action. Earl is keenly aware of all that is wrong with his new home—the living conditions determined by “European Only” policies; the illicit fulfillment of sexual desires manipulated by restrictions on pubs, dances, and other social networks; denial of an education by academic elites; repression of advancement in the work arena by so-called white

union brothers. He is also aware that all of these constraints prevent him from making a prosperous life. The prostitute attempts to make Earl pay her twice; she calls it a “coloured tax” and Earl continues to learn that this coloured tax is collected in a number of ways (284). In that moment, they are discovered and chased by a group of white boys. The young men run in different directions, and when Earl finds Ralph later on, his friend is bloody and swollen, having been beaten almost to death.

The hurting in Earl’s head intensifies after Ralph’s eventual death, and the trauma of these experiences affects his mental health. His illness causes Earl to be even more vulnerable to the country and its systems. We learn that he was hospitalized on three occasions, including one for a period of five years. Earl’s ex-wife gives us some indication that his time away was also a period of trauma and institutionalized violence. She says to Keith:

He’s sick Keith, so you have to be a bit easy on him. Hospital changed him, both times, from a quiet man who used to read all the time, and who kept himself to himself, into a depressed and anxious man. But the doctor told me that’s the risk with the shock treatment. You know the electricity. (179)

Phillips reveals the multiple ways that England affected Earl. The initial shock of England that overcomes Earl on the docks is repeated in the traumas he experiences in English society. Earl often refers to the voices he heard in his head—Ralph’s being the loudest, and the voices appear when Earl experiences overt racism and discrimination. Moreover, Phillips draws a connection between the electroshock therapy and immigrant life in England and suggests that Earl’s new home performs damaging physical and psychological violence on the man. *In the Falling Snow*, presents Earl in the words of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*: “My body was

returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning on this white winter's day” (93). Earl is splayed by this English life. His race is situated firmly in the realm of limitations, and his lack of access to financial resources, or the means to get economic resources, leaves him further entrenched in despair and trauma. Earl is further disempowered by not being able to care for his young son. We are also told that his ex-wife, Brenda, was encouraged by Earl's doctor to foster out the child. Phillips portrays repeated attempts to institutionalize young black men and boys, and his reflection on this contemporary tool of empire is echoed in Laurie's arrest. Again, the novel draws a line from the early twentieth century to the early twenty-first century depicting the evolved and re-traumatizing manipulation of black manhood. The twenty-first century rendering is laced with all the trappings and rhetoric of progress so that the arresting and questioning officer in Laurie's case is not white but black. The facility that houses Barron and Earl's peers is called the Mandela Centre, and even Keith's job as a social worker for multicultural issues suggests some kind of shift toward equality at the institutional level. What we learn from Keith's experience at work, however, is that the effort is purely superficial and is incapable of undoing decades of trauma. Rather, it often re-inflicts trauma in a twenty-first-century mode. Even in Keith's life the home space delivers trauma. I maintain that the novel offers a Neo-anticolonial Refraction that presents trauma, and, more importantly, depicts how that trauma is re-inflicted. The re-infliction of trauma in, what is arguably a Neo-anticolonial novel is unique in that one character can experience a trauma that is not directly connected to his or her life. So the re-inflicting of trauma can function generationally, for example, and this is precisely the function of the Neo-anticolonial Refraction. Laurie's experience with the law, the educational system, and with the family of his pregnant girlfriend in some ways mirrors the lives of his forefathers, but of more consequence is the fact that his experience and relationships are

directly affected by the trauma of his father and grandfather. Keith's estrangement from his son mirrors his estrangement from his father, and Earl's disconnection from his son is a consequence of the trauma of English society. This new homeland represents a site of multiple traumas, and the men eventually look away from the British homeland even as they find parts of their roots here. The backward/forward direction of this gaze toward the Caribbean is also a Neo-anticolonial Refraction, but one that is presented with a degree of uncertainty and possibility.

3.4 Away from England

Although ill-equipped to do so, Keith serves as a generational mediator between the legacy of his father and the future of his son. His role as a social worker also suggests that he is the medium through which problems of the race could be unpacked, but he shows both ambivalence and a weak effort to right wrongs. His job as a community administrator is aimed at making amends for past injustices, but reveals itself to merely pander to the idea of equality. In addition, Keith is, initially, incapable of grasping the history that presents Earl as an example of the vestiges of an English past that was caustic for the Caribbean man. Keith's position and life is thus presented as a temporary and superficial reprieve. Phillips's depiction of Earl's reflection on his life reveals the real trauma of the experience of England, while Keith's life reveals the dissatisfaction that plagues the second generation. The novel depicts a trauma that lingers in the minds of the men who experienced it, and it shows that traumas can be re-inflicted and shape the lived experience. Looking away from England, in a sort of metaphorical departure from the country, is portrayed as a means to alleviate the trauma experienced. Phillips's characters, depending on the degree of their relationship with England, all demonstrate a desire or interest in leaving England for the Caribbean. Earl, on his deathbed, expresses a desire to return to the Caribbean, while Keith and Laurie show some interest in visiting Earl's island home. This desire

is preceded by recognition of the self as having imbibed and depicted English characteristics. Keith and Laurie are presented as insiders while Earl is depicted as a subject that never truly belongs. The interruption of this English identity, with a looking back to the Caribbean, offers the possibility for healing for this group of men. The novel refracts the trauma and the re-traumatization of the black men in the texts, and it allows the second generation, Earl's son and grandson, to reject Englishness and look toward the Caribbean for some sense of self. This looking away from England, depicted with the experiences of trauma and economic subjugation, is Neo-anticolonial as it presents the gaze on, and departure from, a European way of life as a means for family healing and understanding self. While Laurie and Keith come to this idea very early in life, Earl, on the other hand, does not express his desire until much later. Consequently, it is his voicing of this decision that leads Keith and Laurie to also discuss a return. When he was young, and even after Ralph's death, Earl was still determined to make a life in England. Before marrying Brenda he tells her, "I'm not going home...I don't have nothing to go back to, not after all this time (295). Yet, despite having nothing to return to—and even moreso now after fifty years—Earl desires to leave England.

Keith's visits to Earl in the hospital are revealing and give him a look at his father's life. When the nurse brings Earl something to eat, the man says to his son, "You see what I've turned into? A bloody Englishman sharing a cup of tea and a biscuit with you" (249). Before that, Earl also distinguishes himself from Keith in regards to Englishness when they walk together in a nearby park, "Boy, you not feeling the cold? You're like a true Englishman able to sit out here without a hat or scarf and acting like the weather ain't bothering you at all" (174). This moment, in particular, is important to understanding how the text presents the lives of these men. Earl's shock of arrival is tied to the intense cold that invades his body on the deck of the ship. Keith's

ability to endure this cold paints him as the “Son of Empire” that Earl could never be. His success in university and in his working career also set him apart from his father. Yet, Phillips presents the men as having similar desires to look towards the Caribbean. In the hospital, Earl tells his son, “I want to go home, Keith. I don’t mean to some stupid English house. I mean home. Home, home...you understanding what I mean? I’m not from here” (252). It is possible that Earl’s disdain for hospitals and other institutions rouses his desire to leave England. Or it might have been Keith’s probing and Earl’s telling his story to his son. This reliving the memory of the trauma of England also gives Keith the opportunity to think about his childhood and the trauma he endured as a young black boy. Seeing the struggles that his own son will likely face, Keith discusses living abroad with Laurie’s mother, who responds, “So where do you think we should have brought him up? The West Indies, your imaginary homeland?” (206). Keith is struck by Annabelle’s words, and he recognizes, even more profoundly, his sense of unbelonging, but it motivates him to further consider the Caribbean. In fact, the original rupturing of father and son leads to the desire to return to the Caribbean.

Phillips brings Earl’s experience into the twenty-first century (world of iPods and such) and reveals how his life has deteriorated even as so-called progress has been made—as depicted in Keith’s experiences. Revealing the trauma of colonization and empire—the Neo-anticolonial text traces out the subtle and systemic problems of racism and capitalism, but, more importantly it offers a portrait of the past which, in turn, presents some edification for the current state of affairs. Caryl Phillips’s *In the Falling Snow* embodies various aspects of Fanonian concepts, and reveals the continued and sustained oppression of the black man. I maintain that the novel offers refractions which take Fanon’s arguments into the twenty-first century, in particular, to see how

the concerns he expressed in *Black Skin, White Masks* reveal the particular challenges of this era which are rooted in access to capital.

3.5 Exiled in America, ‘Somewhere in the Darkness’

In a 2005 interview with John McLeod, published in *Moving Worlds*, Caryl Phillips talked about the historical figure Bert Williams, whose life the novel *Dancing in the Dark* re-imagines. When asked about Bert’s finding a safe space, Phillips relays the story told by W.C. Fields about Bert’s encounter with a racist bartender in St. Louis, Missouri. When the barman initially refused to serve Bert Williams a whiskey and then ultimately charged him fifty-dollars (in 1914), Bert put five hundred dollars on the bar and claimed that he would purchase ten. Of course, Bert never really finds a safe space, and this particular narrative does not make it to the pages of *Dancing in the Dark*. Phillips chooses, instead, to imagine the life of Bert Williams, because, as he says in the interview with McLeod, “the actual facts, the nuts and bolts, of his life were not as important to me as the emotional texture of his life—as the heart of the man, the loneliness of the man, the courage of the man” (McLeod 144). And Phillips’s novel does imagine these very private aspects of the entertainer’s life. The novel depicts Bert Williams, the light-skinned son of Afro-Caribbean immigrants to the United States, as he emerges into a powerhouse on the stage as a blackface performer. Phillips charts the trauma enacted on Bert as he becomes the minstrel—the racist caricature of blackness—for predominantly white audiences, and he portrays the subsequent disalienation that affects Bert’s ability to connect or maintain connections with others in his community. However, Phillips’s telling of this story also emphasizes the financial power of Bert Williams, the highest paid entertainer, black or white, in the early twentieth century. In fact, Bert’s participation in the economy of entertainment during this era is a fact that works its way into Phillips’s novel, albeit less directly. Even in very subtle

ways, Bert's participation in U.S. American capitalism figures in the psychic violence which leaves him emotionally debilitated. Unlike the men in Phillips's *In the Falling Snow* who have little or no access to capital, Bert Williams has a great deal of wealth and yet he experiences a trauma that results in a similar cultural paralysis. Bert's story, as imagined by Phillips, is a Neo-anticolonial Refraction as it gazes back into the early twentieth century, creating an image of the relationship between capitalism and race. Whereas the refractions in the previous section served to show capitalism as racially exclusionary, this section will illustrate that even when access to capital is granted it comes at a price that is inclusive only on racist terms. The trauma of this ironic livelihood leaves the men emasculated and impotent in a number of ways.

Furthermore, this type of participation in the framework of cultural hegemony engenders a trauma that is bequeathed to future generations. Phillips himself recognizes this bequest and notes that it is one of the reasons he took up the story of Bert Williams. He says, "One of the reasons that I wrote this novel now is because of hip hop. Because the same debate surrounds rap and hip hop. At what point do you tell an individual, "You are letting the side down"? "You should not do that because your responsibility is not to your art, your responsibility is to your imagined community"?" (McLeod 145). While *Dancing in the Dark* has very few moments which place its readers in the present, the narrative, as a Neo-anticolonial Refraction, begs for a discussion about the contemporary permutations of Bert's reality. In fact, Bert, as a narrator, I contend, speaks from the grave—as a quasi-omniscient figure telling his past with the lens of the future. His gaze at self, in the mirror and otherwise, comes with a spirit of lamentation that was arguably not always present in the early-twentieth-century Bert. As the novel closes, presumably with Bert's transition to afterlife, the man searches in darkness, and, what can be read as a final performance, he addresses his audience:

Others will come after me to entertain you, and they will happily change their name and put on whatever clownish costume you wish them to wear, and dance, and sing, and perform in a manner that will amuse you, and you *will* mimic them, and you *will* make your money. (209)

This moment is a Neo-anticolonial Refraction that casts several images, particularly of the legacy of racist caricature in the live arts. Bert, the colonial subject who has traveled not to the center of empire like Earl, Ralph, and Baron of *In the Falling Snow* but rather to the United States—the location of a different kind of empire, realizes that his exceptional role will be easily recreated to further the financial gains of the exploitative “you” (208). The “you” can easily be identified as white U.S. America or the racist ideology and its promulgators who shaped the trajectory of Bert’s career and life. As noted earlier, Aimé Césaire argued that the “barbarism of Western Europe [had] reached an incredibly high level, being only surpassed—far surpassed, it is true—by the barbarism of the United States” (*Discourse* 47). Phillips’s *Dancing in the Dark* portrays how this barbarity—that is the plague of white racist ideology—infects and destroys black communities and individuals like Bert Williams. Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* is also useful to understanding the Neo-anticolonial Refractions in this novel, particularly in terms of the disalienation of the black individual performing in the face of whiteness. While calling on Fanon to interrogate an African American space might initially seem problematic, I contend that Fanonian concepts about race and racism hearken to, and complement, ideas espoused by African American scholar William E.B. Du Bois at the turn of the century³⁵. Moreover, Fanon is useful here as we consider the multiple-consciousness³⁶ of the characters who occupy not just two, but at times three or four realities—on stage, in the black community, in the face of the

white world, and in a new national space. John Cullen Gruesser, in *Confluences: Postcolonialism, African American Literary Studies and the Black Atlantic*, brings African American literature under the lens of postcolonial theory in order to, as he argues, “identify points of correspondence and build bridges between them” (2). Gruesser’s study credits Paul Gilroy’s concept of the Black Atlantic³⁷ as a launching point, and it emphasizes that “theoretical concepts imported from one discipline or culture into another have resulted in important advances in critical praxis” (2). Gruesser rightly acknowledges the unique and profound differences which exist in the Diaspora, but he also notes the numerous collaborations which have occurred. It is from this discursive intersection which I intend to move with my analysis of Phillips’s *Dancing in the Dark*. The novel, as read within a Neo-anticolonial framework, regards the anticolonial work of Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, offers a gaze onto the twentieth century, and refracts an image which situates the reader in a discussion about the nature of the twenty-first century world order as it relates to race, capitalism, and in some instances, gender in the United States.

3.6 Burnt Cork and the Economy of Racial Caricature

The prologue of *Dancing in the Dark* introduces us to Bert Williams. Here we see, immediately, the distance which exists between Bert and others in the community. The narrative tells us that women “never eyeballed him, for this was a man who lived way beyond their hips” (3). Men and children also watched him—having no access to the man who the narrative tells us walked “purposefully toward his daily rendezvous with midtown business. White man’s business” (4). Arguably, this white man’s business is the performance of racial caricature that Bert does each night. However, this sentence also offers a more nuanced look at Bert Williams and his ability to engage in all sorts of white man business that distances him from other Harlem

residents. It is a kind of whiteness that sets Bert apart: the first being his donning blackface and the white racist depiction of blackness and the second is his access to capital as a result of his performances. Bert is a light-skinned black man, thus we cannot position him as racially white; however, he accomplishes the ability to participate in a kind of whiteness, or at least activities in the white world, by virtue of his financial status. Phillips conveys Bert's status mainly in subtle ways. He uses phrases like "senior partner" to describe Bert (*Dancing* 9).

Karen Sotiropoulos, in *Staging Race: Black Performers in Turn of the Century America*, reflects on the history of blackface minstrelsy and argues that people like Bert Williams were "muckraking performers [who] played stereotypes as a way of showing the falseness of the images, imagining that whites as well as blacks would see their performances as exposés of American racism" (257). Sotiropoulos's study presupposes that African Americans in blackface operated successfully within the frame of Du Boisian double-consciousness and had a certain degree of agency that allowed them to "combat the rhetoric of violence" while on the stage (257). While there is little in the way of reflections on this experience by black artists, it is safe to assume that the experience of wearing the veil³⁸ (in all the ways, literal and figurative, that blackface formed a multiple-layered veil) was not an empowering one, but one of a deep and wrenching pain.

Robert Nowatzki recently argued that "Williams's inability to see himself in the reflection of his blacked-up persona is paralleled by his white audience's failure to recognize him as Egbert Austin Williams when he is not performing as a 'coon' in blackface" (15). He further asserts that "the novel emphasizes the crippling impact of blackface performance on Williams's self-image, which becomes increasingly shaped by his 'coon' character and his audience's racist perceptions of him" (11). Phillips's fictional Bert Williams experiences the trauma of life behind

Du Bois's veil. At once he grapples with his self-concept—his own understanding of self—and the white racist projection of his identity. As such, he is Du Bois's:

seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world— a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world...[experiencing] a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, 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. (6)

Bert, unfortunately, experiences a multiple consciousness³⁹ as a result of his Caribbean identity. Fanon, like Du Bois who preceded him, also pokes at a multiple existence, but Fanon emphasized this as “an epidermal racial schema” experienced in triplicate⁴⁰ (92). Craig Smith's study “Scenes of Trauma: Violent Rites, Migration, and the Performance of Afro-Caribbean Masculinities” which includes a look at Phillips's *Dancing in the Dark*, notes that “Fanon describes a process that shatters the unified self, resulting in a tripling of identity accompanied by an obliteration/disappearance of self” (131). This disemboweling of the self that Bert experiences does not open a redemptive space as Sotiropoulos would argue. Instead, it engenders a repeated trauma that is experienced on and off stage, and Phillips's novelization of this suffering forms a refraction that not only implicates the racist and exploitative economy of entertainment, but it also forms a critique of twenty-first century entertainers engaged in a

contemporary “blackface” performance. These refractions are particularly Neo-anticolonial as they directly engage the ideas espoused by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Bert’s gazing at himself in mirror constantly reminds him that “not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man” (*BSWM* 90). Fanon affirms that “the black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man” (90). As Bert applies the cork to his face he is keenly aware that his blacking up offers him only a superficial protection from his white audience “who did not have time to ridicule or hurt him” because they were too busy laughing (*Dancing* 57). Still, Bert suffers under the gaze of whiteness: “As I apply the burnt cork to my face, as I smear the black into my already sable skin, as I put on my lips, I am leaving behind Egbert Austin Williams. However, I can, at any time, reclaim this man with soap and water and the rugged application of a coarse towel. I can reclaim him, but only later, after the laughter” (57). Unfortunately, Bert loses a piece of himself and his manhood with each application—with each glance at his corked reflection in the mirror. He is, as Fanon says, “a toy in the hands of the white man” and he “can’t go to the [stage] without encountering himself” (*BSWM* 119). Bert’s trauma on and off the stage is directly linked to his capacity to command a remarkable salary. The access to financial power allows Bert to evade some of the constraints and challenges of being black in the United States at the turn of the century. However, the widespread demand for his craft and its constant performance of racism fails to insulate him from racial trauma. Nowatzki notes that Bert Williams was working in the late nineteenth century “when minstrelsy had lost its working class edge and had become more mainstream, commercialized, conventional, and racist (11). The demand for this kind of entertainment resulted in tremendous fame for Williams, and by the end of his life in 1922 Bert was earning at least \$50,000 dollars per year.

His work and fame ultimately brought Bert and his partner George Walker across the Atlantic to the United Kingdom where the company was able to see another version of white expectations of blackness. The experience links the United States with Europe in many of the ways discussed by Césaire in *Discourse on Colonialism*. Williams recognized that within the economy of racial caricature there was a tremendous emotional tax on the wealth he was building. As Bert and the rest of the cast leave England, he and George have a silent exchange which results in a refraction that speak to the state of the twenty-first century role of the black performer. We are given Bert's unspoken lamentation:

Is the colored performer to be forever condemned to pleasing a white audience with farce, and then attempting to conquer these same people with music and dance? Is the colored American performer to be nothing more than an exuberant, childish fool named Aunt Jemima, Uncle Rufus, or simply Plantation Darky, who must be neither unique nor individual? Can the colored American ever be free to entertain beyond the evidence of his dark skin? Can the colored man be himself in twentieth-century America? (100)

Dancing in the Dark, as Stephen Clingman has argued about other Phillips novels, reveals that “the past is irredeemably part of the present in a way that haunts, trails and intrudes—the dust and ice in the tail of a comet that the present will never escape” (54). In this way, the novel's gazing back on to an era that forever shaped the future of American entertainment, casts a refraction that forces a look on the twenty-first century. This particular refraction speaks to the sort of contemporary racial caricature that ultimately reinforces

stereotypes about black masculinity and black womanhood, and, more importantly, it exposes how these images become the driving force behind a capitalist and exploitative industry of entertainment.

3.7 Sexuality and the Black Man as Phallus

The dynamics of the relationships between men and women in *Dancing in the Dark* offer one of the most poignant links to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. In addition to facing a white world with its racist notions of blackness *and* ultimately performing this caricature, Phillips's two primary male characters negotiate a world in which their sexuality and manhood is shaped, albeit in different ways, by the same phenomena that drives their success. Craig Smith, noting that "Bert's desires were controlled by the whims of the white American public," argued that "the expectations of his white audience members are that 'niggers' are not capable of love" (145). Smith highlights Aida's comments that "Prejudice means that, of course, we can never fall in love or have a romance at the center of our Williams and Walker productions...we pretend that we have no such emotions, and we are all guilty of this pretense, all of us. We accept that the remotest suspicion of a love story will condemn us to ridicule" (*Dancing* 117-18). Smith continues by suggesting that "Bert's internalization of this prejudice explains his inability to show intimacy to Lottie. Phillips' narrative indicates that the dehumanizing racial slurs and Williams' blackface performance engender the loss of sexual identity via the merger of self and performed self as asexual" (145). This, however, is not the case for George Walker, who is portrayed as hypersexual. George's desire for white women and overt resistance to white men is, simultaneously, a mode of resistance and an urge toward whiteness. It is a type of cultural capital⁴¹ that initially offers George a sense of pride but ultimately leaves him emotionally and physically eviscerated. George is depicted in the likeness of Fanon's black man in chapter three

of *Black Skin, White Masks*. In “The Man of Color and the White Woman” Fanon wrote “Out of the blackest part of my soul, through the zone of hachures, surges up this desire to be suddenly *white*” (45). Again, I contend that this desire, in the case of George, is not a wanting to be phenotypically white, but rather a longing for the power, regard, and respect that comes with being a certain kind of white man. The historical George Walker is said to have remarked time and again his disdain for whiteness. Yet his urge towards white power and capital functions in a Fanonian vein. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon continues:

I want to be recognized not as *Black*, but as *White*...who better than the white woman to bring this about? By loving me, she proves to me that I am worthy of a white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man. Her love opens the illustrious path that leads to total fulfillment...I espouse white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. Between these white breasts that my wandering hands fondle, white civilization and worthiness become mine. (45)

George plays out this urge through his refusal to fully perform the caricature of blackness in the Williams and Walker show. We are told that he wanted to “make everything a little more tasteful” and “possessed such a high sense of [self]” (36). Bert even observes that George is “brimming...with a brashness that makes white men angry and causes colored men to move a little closer to him in the hope that some of his confidence might ease its way out of his short dark body and into their own cautious hearts” (52). However, it is George’s urge toward “white civilization” via the breasts of Eva that ultimately leads to his demise. Throughout the novel, in the midst of short narratives and multiple narrators, there is evidence of George’s sexual

entanglements with white women. He is almost killed in Cleveland for sleeping with a white man's wife, and later, as he and Bert resolve financial matters at the clerk of the court, we learn of "his painful yearning for Eva" (114). Sex with Eva transforms George; initially he feels empowered, but ultimately he is relegated to mere object in the Fanonian sense. In "The Psychopathology of the Black Man" Fanon discusses the white woman's sexual desire for black men and the black man as a "penis symbol" (137). This is precisely what George becomes for Eva, and George recognizes it after their act when he notes that "she has seen what she wished to see and he has failed" (117). Initially, the reader might be led to believe that the failure George speaks of relates to some inadequacy in their coupling. Considered in the Fanonian context, however, we see that his failure has to do with his inability to retain the manhood and power he has sought through this relationship. In fact, we see that Eva does not wish to see or hear George. Her only desire is to copulate with him: "He understands that she does not wish to hear his voice, and she cares little for his wit or intelligence. He understands that she sees something else, but whatever it is that she sees he suspects that it is not George Walker" (116). Ironically, George is not a man in the eyes of the woman who is supposed to be the key to his (white) manhood. Like Fanon's analysis of Michel Cournot's *Martinique*, this look at George in Phillips's *Dancing in the Dark* reveals that Eva "no longer [sees] the black man; [she sees] a penis; the black man has been occulted. He has been turned into a penis. He *is* a penis" (147). Eva's viewing George as such is his failure. His efforts to claim power and manhood through the white woman's body fails with a pleasurable misery and leaves him in, what he arguably sees as, a state of his own insufficient blackness. Unfortunately, his black manhood is too bruised to even attempt any kind of redemption with his wife. Immediately after the moment with Eva, the reader is transported to George and Ada's bed where his gaze upon her is a direct contrast to the

“civilization” resting between Eva’s white breasts. The narrator tells us, “Her small breasts are now no more than two stubborn buds that appear to be no longer either sensitive or inviting, and his stiff body stiffens further at her accidental touch, but he knows her depressed soul has long ago learned to live with this hurt” (117). The novel consistently presents a disregard or negative regard for black women and black womanhood, and George’s relationship with his wife is one such example that will be taken up in more detail in the next section. Like George, Bert’s relationship with his wife is severely affected by the emasculation that occurs and repeats in everyday life and on the stage.

3.8 Black Women Undone by the ‘Whiteness of Winter’

Gwen Bergner’s essay, “The Role of Gender in Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*,” attempts to “broaden Fanon’s outline of black women’s subjectivity and to work toward delineating the interdependence of race and gender” (77). Although Bergner neglects Black Feminist⁴² critique, choosing instead to employ feminist psychoanalytic theory to “review Fanon’s construction of gender while illuminating the contributions of his psychoanalytic framework of racial identity,” her work is useful to understanding aspects of Phillips’s depiction of black women in *Dancing in the Dark* as Neo-anticolonial Refractions rooted in Fanonian concepts (77). Bergner questions Fanon’s proximity to, and purported understanding of, black women, and she problematizes his “decontextualized analysis of black femininity,” which she argues, “re-creates the structure of the colonialist discourse Fanon successfully deconstructs in much of *Black Skin, White Masks*” (83). Likewise, *Dancing in the Dark*’s Neo-anticolonial Refractions project black women and black womanhood bound by a racialized and patriarchal sexism perpetuated by black men. At times the refractions in literature reveal the problematic

aspects of early anti-colonialists like Fanon, but they never-the-less offer a complex approach to the current problems and challenges of the twenty-first century.

The refraction projected in this section announces ambivalence toward black women in the world of the text. Phillips's black women are much like Fanon's black women in that they are often precariously sexed and simultaneously nearly invisible. The Neo-anticolonial Refraction, however, demonstrates that it is not a vacancy on the part of the black woman, but rather a result of the black men's racial trauma that makes them incapable of connecting with her. Much like Fanon's chapter "The Woman of Color and the White Man" in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Phillips's *Dancing in the Dark* pathologizes the black woman without offering her the same absolution he gives to the black men in the world of the text. After speaking at length about the white woman in "The Black Man and Psychopathology," Fanon says of the black woman, "We know nothing about her" (157). Bergner also notes that even in the chapter dedicated to the discussion of black women ("The Woman of Color and the White Man"), Fanon uses male-centric universal language and thus effectively "reveal[s] much about the economy of gender, class, and sexuality that binds black women" (83). This distance from the black woman, coupled with a reverence for black men and direct claims about white women result in the marginalization of the black woman. That she, like Fanon's black woman, is relegated to a life of discontent comes as no surprise to the main woman figure in Phillips's *Dancing in the Dark*. We are told that Bert's wife, Lottie Williams, "knows that a colored woman cannot expect too much out of this life" (*Dancing* 53). However, Lottie is initially satisfied with Bert, and she views him as "a capital second husband...a man solid like a tree but with the sensitivity of a boy" (52-53). Early on the couple shares some intimacies and Bert attempts to reveal himself and how he came to play the controversial blackface role. The narrator tells us that Lottie

“understands that he is asking to be forgiven...that her suitor is a man who is playing a part...he is playing a character...a performer who applies makeup in order to play a part” (35). Shortly after, we see a conversation between Lottie and her friend Ada in which her friend chides Lottie for wanting to marry a “white man’s fool” (37). Lottie’s reaction to this conversation is poignant: “Lottie looks herself up and down in the dressing room mirror, and then she picks up the powder brush. These days she finds it necessary to apply extra makeup, which both depresses and alarms her” (37). Here, it is clear that Lottie’s need to compensate and augment her physical beauty is directly linked to the fact of Bert’s blacking-up and the subsequent trauma caused by his performances. Just as Bert dons the burnt cork to play a part, Lottie adds extra make-up to play the part of a blackface performer’s wife. Initially, it appears as a way for Lottie to align herself with her fiancé. However, the novel emphasizes Bert’s disconnection from Lottie in a way that depicts her as sexually undesirable, unfeminine, and unattractive. The narrator, while attributing Bert’s melancholy to his role on the stage, presents Bert’s inability to be intimate as a consequence of Lottie’s failure to engage her husband in that way. Bert’s reclusive nature is repeatedly juxtaposed with an image of a physically flawed Lottie. Lottie is “equated with lack,” as suggested by Gwen Berger of Fanon’s black woman (85). She is unable to provide Bert with whatever he needs to ease his psychological burden, and the young couple exists in a phlegmatic state of wedlock:

At night, in their bed, he recoils from her touch, and his eyes brim with tears at the slightest woe. Now that they are married he calls her Mother, but she does not have the heart to ask him to discover an alternative word for she instinctively understands that he has no other. She would prefer Lottie, or wife, or darling, for Mother

instantly reduces her to something less than a woman, but she imagines that in some part of his unconscious this is probably how her husband now regards her. As being something less than a woman, a companion perhaps, or a new extension to the family, but certainly not the trusted bedrock upon which he will build the rest of his life. (42).

The moments that depict Bert and Lottie's lack of intimacy are almost always followed by a regard of Lottie's physical appearance and demeanor. The narrative is a decidedly gendered and racialized one, revealing the white racist ideas about beauty and womanhood which plague Lottie and other black women. While Bert chooses to perform the white racist caricature of blackness, Lottie's being subject to such projections is beyond her control. We are told of Lottie's having endured her grandmother's weekly and torturous efforts to straighten the young girl's hair. Lottie's experience is relayed alongside a description of her sister's flowing hair and light eyes, and it is evident that Lottie, like Bert, wears a kind of mask that is also shaped by whiteness. We are told, "Lottie does not know whether to talk to him about her hair. The fact is she does not talk to anybody about her hair. She simply hopes that nobody will notice. It is her own private misery, and she is seldom without a hat" (43). Lottie's suffering under the valuation of a white racist standard, one that arguably oppresses Bert and George as well, forms a refraction which solicits a contemporary discussion of black womanhood and the trauma that shapes the experience of being black and woman in the United States.

This particular Neo-anticolonial Refraction has a multiple effect in that even as it directly engages mid-twentieth century anticolonialists like Fanon, it also problematizes black male privilege and images the need for a new trajectory in counter-hegemonic discourse where black

women are concerned. This distinctly Neo-anticolonial function is representative of the broader aim of Neo-anticolonialism—that is the unapologetic interrogation and problematizing of oppositional scholarship (such as Postcolonial Theory) and a move towards a more transgressive activist scholarship that would destabilize the hegemonic structure, particularly, in this case, where the treatment of black women is concerned. Black women, as Deborah King has noted, experience a “Multiple Jeopardy” in which their lives and opportunities for liberation are limited by the intersection of race, gender, and class.⁴³ *Dancing in the Dark* portrays a nuanced multiple jeopardy in the case of Lottie. Even though she is not limited in terms of class—she and Bert have access to significant capital—her life continues to be shaped by a raced and gendered notion of blackness, and racist ideas about the insufficiency of black womanhood directly affect her ideas about self and her interactions with Bert. Both Lottie and her husband are governed by whiteness: Bert is relegated to nightly performing of a white racist caricature of blackness that emasculates him, and Lottie is subject to pining for a man whose trauma has left him impotent. Bert’s inability to connect leaves Lottie further enmeshed in the feeling of inadequacy long ago pressed into her via her grandmothers’ attempts to beautify her according to white ideals. Lottie’s preoccupation with her hair causes a refraction that speaks to twenty-first century urge toward a white standard of beauty. In what can be described as a contemporary and inverted minstrelsy, black women in the current epoch put on long flowing hair weaves in an (arguably subconscious) effort to fit a white standard of beauty. Directly linked to the emasculation of the black man and his subsequent urge to whiteness to relieve that impotence, the black woman’s shame of black womanhood becomes fertile ground for capitalist endeavors, particularly those in plastic surgery and even basic modes like so-called beauty creams and chemicals reminiscent of Madame CJ Walker’s million dollar effort⁴⁴ to straighten out black women’s hair.

Phillips's imagining of Lottie's psychosis being rooted in the "problem" of her hair as opposed to the inability of her husband to satisfy her sexual and emotional needs relieves Bert of the burden and responsibility by revealing a certain degree of "untouchability" in Lottie. We are told that Lottie's now dead husband, Mr. Thompson, also retracted from her. We learn about Lottie's experience of having had her hair and scalp burned, and we are also told that "When Mr. Thompson stopped touching her she blamed her hair. She begged her hair *stylist* to find some treatment that would save her marriage, and together they began purposefully to work through all the products on the shelves, but to no avail" (43).

The plight of Lottie's hair is juxtaposed with the story of Lottie's sister Florence who is described as having flowing hair and light blue eyes. Flo's story is distinctly different that Lottie's beginning with the narrative of her hair. We are told that "Florence's hair took nice and easy" to straightening and "flowed out to her shoulders" (45). Lottie is positioned against the white symbols of beauty emblazoned on Florence's body, and *Dancing in the Dark* falls prey to the familiar depictions of black womanhood shaped by white racist discourse and presented widespread in literature. Here we see the mulatta archetype⁴⁵ in the life of Florence. Lottie's younger sister is the object of many men's desire and she ultimately partners with a man and has several children. As is the case with the mulatta archetype, Flo becomes a central sexual object and her life ends tragically. We are told that the men who came into her life "left crumpled bills on the side table before they hit the door and disappeared back onto the streets leaving Flo to endure the resentful eyes of her children who by now were becoming familiar with the uncomfortable weight of the word "company"" (48). Florence's descent into sex work results in her death "with her throat neatly cut and her skirt hoisted up over her shoulders" (48). Phillips's depictions of black womanhood in *Dancing in the Dark* do not divert from the archetypes. Lottie

and Ada, and smaller characters like Florence, the prostitute in Detroit, and the young woman who bore George's child are all constrained by a particular image or stereotype of black womanhood (59-61). Lottie is simultaneously mother and negligent aunt as she nurtures Bert and yet refused to care for her nieces during her previous marriage. This presentation of an un-sexed, mammy-like⁴⁶ Lottie persists, and we even see Lottie internalize these positions: "She had long ago convinced herself that to be touched was not that important, and she had imagined, as was the case with Mr. Thompson, that once they were married he would choose not to press any serious claim upon her body. And being a gentleman, Mr. Williams has chosen not to do so" (83).

Are we to believe that Mr. Thompson, as a business man, endured a similar kind of trauma and emasculation as Bert did? Was he also a victim of American racist capitalism? Or are we to situate both his and Bert's rejection of Lottie as something directly linked to black womanhood? Were these men, who were arguably firmly rooted in "white man's business" deeply immersed in and/or violated by an ideal of whiteness that prevented them from loving their black wife? These questions return us to Fanon's black man and the ambivalence toward black women coupled with a desire for whiteness. This Fanonian symptom which ails black men has, arguably, infected Phillips's *Dancing in the Dark*.

As Bert and his peers approach England, we are witnesses to Lottie's pondering as she stands next to her husband on the deck of the *SS Aurania*. Observing the "loneliness behind [Bert's] sad eyes" Lottie "wishes more than anything in the world that there was some way for her to bring sunshine into his life" (95). The text suggests Lottie's refusal to claim her wish when a "sudden gust of wind threatens to dislodge her hat and she quickly reaches up a hand and clamps it down on her head" (95). Again, Bert's happiness, or the possibility for happiness, is

situated with Lottie's condition. There is a subtle suggestion that her obsession with her hair and her hiding of her head is linked to Bert's inability to find happiness in the marriage. However, there is repeated evidence that Bert's distance is a wound self-inflicted with the weapon of whiteness. When they return to Harlem from the United Kingdom, Bert comes back even more detached from Lottie than when he left. It is arguable that the experience of performing in Europe, to a white audience whose ideas of blackness are firmly rooted in white supremacist ideology, had an additional traumatizing effect on Bert. We are told that "he sleeps now in a different room than Mother, but she never mentions this fact. These days, neither the thought nor the touch of his wife produces any stirring of ardor in his loins and so he eventually deemed it best to make a dignified, if somewhat clumsy, exit from their bedroom" (108). Bert's disregard for Lottie can be likened to Fanon's textual disregard for the black woman. More strikingly, like Fanon, Phillips considers black women "almost exclusively in terms of their sexual relationships with men; feminine desire is thus defined as an overly literal and limited (hetero)sexuality (Bergner 77). Lottie's pining and desire for Bert becomes more pronounced as the novel progresses, and her ritual of masturbating daily in the bathroom is described in almost mechanical terms: "Lottie lives for the cherished moment in her sprawling day when she is able to secrete herself in the privacy of the bathroom" (115). Later we see her deep longing for physical intimacy with her husband:

Lottie hopes that one night she might feel a cool tongue against her body, pulling lazy trails of saliva that will be massaged into her skin with the mouth and tongue working as one joyful unit, working slowly, slowly, fly-flicking tongue bruising her in the hollow of her neck don't stop don't yes breathe on me face down

on me deeper and down hoping that she might wake up damp and exhausted and on the very edge of civilization bearing the gift of another person's body. (115)

Repeatedly, we see the women presented in sexual terms—both as hypersexual and longing—or as sexually undesirable. George and Bert, existing both on and off the stage under the glare of economic and cultural whiteness, reject their wives and ultimately black womanhood. While Bert struggles with the inability to connect with Lottie all along, George presents a shift from being able to engage sexually with his wife to a complete rejection of Ada. His explicit rejection of Ada comes immediately after a frenzied episode of sex with Eva. Ada, like Lottie, is depicted with a certain degree of untouchability, and George resists even an “accidental touch” as he stiffens and recoils from Ada, even as “he is filled with remorse” (117).

Unlike his coitus with Eva, George's whole-body erection resists any closeness with Ada and her precarious situation, suffering under the constraint of whiteness, is further emphasized. She, too, has pined for her husband, George, who is taken by a white woman named Eva. While Ada all along demonstrates a resistance to the racist ideas that seem to plague Lottie, she becomes undone in the opposition to white womanhood. Ada's performance in the play *In Dahomey*, reflects her struggle. Her rendition of “I'd Like to be a Real Lady” is an unfortunate irony that positions Ada and Black women outside of “ladyhood” despite her confidence and assertiveness throughout the text. Phillips highlights the direct struggle against white womanhood through the triangle cornering Ada, George and Eva, and George's urges for Eva match his Fanonian pursuit for authentic manhood. We are told that Ada does not care about George's affairs, except in this case, “Ada believes that her full-lipped, ebony-hued husband has no place with a flame-haired, hip-swinging white maiden” (103). George's relationship with Eva

and Ada's response to this affair are both indicative of a multiple tension with whiteness. Phillips, however, in his imagining the lives of the women of the text, does not afford them any redemption, and he consistently presents the black woman in a Fanonian frame. George's desire for Eva, as I have previously noted, is, what Fanon argued in *Black Skin, White Masks*, a "desire to be suddenly *white*" (45). This desire, again, is not a wanting to be phenotypically white, but rather a longing to embody whiteness in the form of power and belonging—in the form of societal standing and garnering respect from others. This urge toward a kind of whiteness serves to destabilize Ada's confidence as a black woman and her resistance to the gaze of whiteness. Gwen Bergner argues that "Black women—even educated, upper-class black women—cannot make the same claim to intellectual and social equality with white men that educated, professional black men can" (84). Thus Ada remains marginalized and disempowered in her relationship and on stage. When Ada Overton becomes Aida Walker, Lottie wonders at her attempts to become someone new, and the novel presents the couples struggling with their multiple consciousnesses. Aida, however, is incapable of moving forward, and faced with the reality of whiteness she attempts suicide. We are told that she was held "spellbound by the winter storm" before she took morphine (129). Aida succumbs to the white racist ideology that effected daily violence upon her psyche and she tries to kill herself facing the whiteness of a winter storm. Even in the midst of her crisis Aida is affected by a kind of whiteness. George sees her "draped in white with her eyes shut tightly against the electric light" and he thinks "she looks like an angel" (131). In this instance George sees his wife anew, and it is arguable that how she is presented—draped in whiteness—has more of an effect on him than the fact of her nearly dying.

After Aida's suicide attempt, George falls ill and the dynamic between him and his wife shift. *Dancing in the Dark* continues its use of archetypes of black womanhood, eventually cementing Lottie and Aida as mammy figures, in essence if not in body⁴⁷. As noted, Bert began to refer to his wife as "Mother" soon after they were married. Lottie was relegated to that role, and Aida shares the same fate when George becomes ill. Both men suffer because of whiteness—Bert at the hand of white representations of blackness—doled out by him, and George at the hand of whiteness in the form of Eva's sexuality which ultimately destroys his body and mind with syphilis. George's tenderness and affection for Aida comes only after his is overrun with a disease that affects his thought and renders him incapable of physical intimacy, and, more importantly, when his wife becomes his nurse. We are told that Aida "sings [to George] as though serenading a child" (149). Later we see her feeding him and helping him to drink water, at which point "he manages to smile at his wife, which appears to lighten her heart" (151). It could be argued that Phillips's men function in a decidedly Fanonian mode:

There are two processes at work here. I do not want to be loved.
 Why? Because one day, a very long time ago, I attempted an object
 relation and I was *abandoned*. I have never forgiven my mother.
 Since I was abandoned, I shall make the other suffer, and
 abandoning the other will be the direct expression of my need for
 revenge. (*BSWM* 56)

This reference from Fanon's chapter "The Man of Color and the White Woman" seems to capture the sentiments portrayed by Bert's and George's existence. Just as the men have an urge toward whiteness, Aida's resistance of the white racist ideals that subdue Lottie end up driving her to suicide. Aida is also subject to the British white gaze which clearly does not see her as a

genuine image of black womanhood. This view, however, is not a redeeming one as they expect Ada to be more of a return to a primitive exotic other. We are told that “the English critics are puzzled by *In Dahomey*, and in particular, they fail to understand why the vast majority of the colored girls are light-skinned with straightened hair” (97). The experience forms additional Neo-anticolonial Refractions and raises an awareness of the ways in which Black women’s bodies are re-newed commodity in the twenty-first century. At once, black women are bombarded by images of a white ideal of beauty that directly contrast with their own concept of self, and they also face a reality in which they (and their characteristics) are automatically placed in opposition to whiteness and deemed undesirable.

Phillips’s very different novels explore the experiences of the African diaspora and offer Neo-anticolonial Refractions which expose the re-traumatization of Black people through the persistent legacy of oppression. More importantly, his depictions directly engage the anti-colonialist work of Frantz Fanon and present a two-fold re-infliction of trauma, whereby the subject experiences additional trauma as a result of his or her relationship with capital, and as a result of the racist ideology that drives capitalism⁴⁸. The most recent novel, *In the Falling Snow* focuses on the future trajectory and its connection to the past of the *Windrush* generation in England, while *Dancing in the Dark* reveals the degree to which psychological trauma endures even in the face of financial success. The intersection of access to capital (or lack of capital), in the face of racial trauma, with a broad novelization of the histories of oppression, present Neo-anticolonial Refractions which entreat discussions about the current negotiations of race, class, and gender.

4 LITERARY EVIDENCE: HISTORICAL FICTION AND THE STORY OF EMPIRE

Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity.

Frantz Fanon⁴⁹

Chapter four investigates the work of Nigerian Igbo writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Indian-born writer Amitav Ghosh, specifically their twenty-first-century novels which depict stories of war, empire and nation-building, and the swell of capitalism. In particular, this chapter aims to delineate the Neo-anticolonial Refractions that offer a view of linked histories of oppression in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*. As the texts expose global oppression linked by capitalist projects, they also present instances of resistance within the mechanisms of war and conflict. Read collectively, these twenty-first-century texts present a global tree of exploitation with roots in an evolving capitalism. The glimpses of resistance and activism against capitalism are also complemented by complicity with the exploitative systems, thus offering a very complex narrative of empire. In this way, both Adichie and Ghosh author historical narratives that dismantle the binary of good and bad, oppressed and oppressor, to reveal that the larger brute of empire relies on a racist capitalist system that masks as progressive and filled with opportunity and improvement. The novels' portrayals of linked histories of oppression are marked by distinct occurrences: the privileging of the underclass lens or perspective, the depictions of colonized participants in the capitalist machine, the effecting of an activist shift to socialism, and multiple sites of resistance such as the environment and even academe. These Neo-anticolonial Refractions allow us to reflect on, for example, the continued decimation of the Niger Delta region where communities of Nigerians ironically live in abject poverty while their land is drained of its valuable oil. More importantly, reflections such as these are guided by characters in the text that inspire the type of insurgent activism needed to break

down the bequest of subordination. Indeed, the novels present possible shifts from and against the systems of oppression, and the texts themselves function as tools of Neo-anticolonialism in the ways that they refract critiques of capitalism and the violence it engenders. Laid on the foundation of anticolonialist work, such as that of Frantz Fanon, Neo-anticolonialism and Neo-anticolonial analysis would naturally effectuate multiple refractions through texts focusing on conflict. Fanon himself was shaped by the Algerian war for liberation, and his critical anticolonial texts and actions were borne out of that experience. In *Wretched of the Earth* Fanon discussed, at length, the potential for war to disrupt, reshape, and destroy economies.⁵⁰

The significance of war is worth exploring in the fiction of Adichie and Ghosh as their novels depict individuals' roles in times of conflict, and they challenge the traditional historical documentation of war which often results in a limited understanding of the international trajectory of intra-national and regional wars. The value of these authors' literary histories is necessary to the study of twenty-first-century conflict. "Literary Historical Fiction," says Sarah L. Johnson, "are set before the middle of the last century, and ones in which the author is writing from research rather than personal experience" (1). Ghosh, in an interview with Frederick Luis Aldama, spoke about his efforts to compose *The Glass Palace*, including his research in the communities about which he wrote:

...I realized at some point that my book was about much more than individual characters. It was also about the history of the Indian diaspora in Southeast Asia, which is an epic history...so I traveled to Malaysia, literally going from compound to compound, finding people who lived through this time, talking to them about the past.

(89)

The Glass Palace calls attention to the colonial and neo-colonial enterprises that would create a class of “native capitalists,” to reword Spivak’s term,⁵¹ who participate in empire-building, but Ghosh also shares the histories of the disempowered and unheard. Adichie’s text has similar portrayals, and the author, like Ghosh engaged the history of her homeland. She has said, “I wanted to engage with my history in order to make sense of my present...because the bequests of colonialism make me angry...because I don’t ever want to forget.”⁵² Adichie also spent a considerable amount of time traveling to local communities and talking to people who lived through the war in her country. *Half of a Yellow Sun* draws attention to the work of activist scholars in wartime, but more importantly it sends clear messages that the little known and unheard individuals have the utmost authority to narrate the history of a community. In the case of Amitav Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace*, resistance comes not only from obscured figures, but also from the environment where the landscape and nature appear as characters. I will explore how the text portrays the environment resisting, and at times succumbing to, the ramifications of conflict. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* also illustrates a landscape under attack, but her novel more specifically engages the ravaged lives of the people within that space. The novels’ Neo-anticolonial Refractions improve our visual acuity through the portrayal of histories of generations of individuals under the regenerating arm of empire.

4.1 Footprints of Empire in Wartime

The Glass Palace, while set primarily in the twentieth century, spans a hundred years, and takes us across the Indian sub-continent to Burma and the Malaysian peninsula. The novel shares the story of the exiled Burmese royal family and connects their lives to other major, but clearly underclass, characters in the text. More significantly, the novel illustrates the relationship of European hegemony within colonial spaces, and, in so doing, creates a Neo-anticolonial

Refraction through the privileging of the underclass perspective. However, the refractions present more so via the portrayal of the colonized as participants in the exploitative capitalist practices and also via the resistance which moves against that project. *The Glass Palace* opens with, and through, the perspective of a servant-boy whose experience is the ligament linking the novel's most significant characters. This privileging of the underclass perspective is a form of Neo-anticolonialism, and it repositions and empowers the subordinate even as it depicts their marginality within their respective communities. *The Glass Palace* goes further in its portrayal of the oppressed and depicts the most subaltern character as the environment itself. While we see the human figures in the text suffer, many of their lives have also been depicted as participants and benefactors in empire-building. Although they ultimately endure violence at the hand of European and American efforts, it is the landscape, and its permanence, which is most affected. The footprints of wartime movements are violent encounters upon the earth. It is arguable that Ghosh's treatment of the environmental changes is an effort to depict core aspects and consequences of imperialism which, ultimately, perpetuate challenges for the inhabitants.

Ghosh's work has received a considerable amount of criticism. His early work, in particular, has received much treatment as seen in several edited collections dedicated to *The Shadow Lines*, most notably Arvind Chowdary's *Amitav Ghosh's the Shadow Lines: Critical Essays*. As recent as 2011, we saw the publication of two book-length texts in India: B.K. Sharma's *The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh: A Postcolonial Perspective* and Nagarajan's *Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Study*. John C. Hawley's 2005 monograph, *Amitav Ghosh: An Introduction* offers a study of the first six books in Ghosh's oeuvre, including a question guide for discussion following the chapters. The text begins with a detailed biography and interview, and the subsequent chapters include thorough summaries of each text and along with a look at themes.

The section which explores *The Glass Palace* aims to focus on the novel's "postcolonial manoeuvres" although the author does not explicitly expand the notion of said tactics (115). Still, Hawley's final chapter makes a strong effort to appropriately situate Ghosh's work among other contemporary Indian writing in English. Hawley's book, like other critical studies on Ghosh, engages the writer directly through an interview. In a similar accord, Tabish Khair's *Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Collection* includes an essay by Ghosh in addition to critical works. An essay by Rukmini Bhaya Nair makes up the bulk of work on *The Glass Palace*, and it argues that the novel is the "most capacious of his fictions" which centers on "the inescapable narrative of colonial displacement" (163). Brinda Bose's edited collection *Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives* includes a grateful foreword written by Ghosh and an interview with the author; and the essays culled offer both critical and pedagogical approaches to the fiction. In her introduction, Bose notes the "numerous mantles of responsibility" borne by the author and his novels, and she argues that "Ghosh's fiction takes upon itself the responsibility of re-assessing its trouble antecedents, using history as a tool by which we can begin to make sense of—or at least come to terms with—our troubling present" (13, 16). Referring to the early works, Bose also states that "Ghosh's imagination is as necessarily diasporic as it is postcolonial, being a product of specific histories of the subcontinent in the twentieth century" (16). While her assertions ring true—as supported by much of the scholarship on Ghosh's work—I contend that the author's imagination is pushing beyond the bounds of the postcolonial. Evidence of this move is also mirrored in Ghosh's remarks against, and refusal to participate in, the Commonwealth Writers Prize 2001.⁵³ He withdrew his novel from the competition and asserted:

That the past engenders the present is of course undeniable; it is equally undeniable that the reasons why I write in English are

ultimately rooted in my country's history. Yet, the ways in which we remember the past are not determined solely by the brute facts of time: they are also open to choice, reflection and judgment. The issue of how the past is to be remembered lies at the heart of *The Glass Palace* and I feel that I would be betraying the spirit of my book if I were to allow it to be incorporated within that particular memorialization of Empire that passes under the rubric of "the Commonwealth".⁵⁴

While there has been a plethora of critical work on Ghosh's fiction, less attention has been given to *The Glass Palace* and Ghosh's engagement with the environment and its direct relation to capital and empire. *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, is a collection dedicated to exploring the modes by which so-called postcolonial writers (like Ghosh, Desai, Walcott, and others) represent the experience of the earth and living on the earth in the midst, or aftermath, of colonization. The introduction, "Toward and Aesthetics of Earth," begins with Frantz Fanon's and Edward Said's engagement with the land as a site of submission, resistance and power. What follows is a collection of essays, including one considering Ghosh's work, that resists the notion that creative work and discourse on the environment is a singularly Anglo-American phenomenon, and it rightly notes that "to deny colonial and environmental histories as mutually constitutive misses the central role the exploitation of natural resources plays in an imperial project" (10).

Anshuman A. Mondal's monograph *Amitav Ghosh*, published in the Contemporary World Writers series, presents a thematic study of the corpus of Ghosh's work in an attempt to assert its intellectual and creative significance to extant questions and discussions of the postcolonial.

Preceding DeLoughrey and Handley, Mondal's text offers no expansive discussion of postcolonial ecology, however it notes, albeit briefly, the author's approach to environmentalism in earlier work such as *The Circle of Reason* and *The Hungry Tide* which was published in 2008. Mondal says that "the [*The Circle of Reason*] demonstrates how environmentalism and conservation nevertheless has its own costs, and it explores the ethical dilemmas that result from this" (18). He also notes that *The Hungry Tide* "is a plea as well as a testimony to the many other songs of the earth, sung by the many different peoples who live on it and claim some portion of it as their own; a plea that they do not go unheard, that they are not swamped by the hungry tides of either development or environmentalism" (19). Of *The Glass Palace*, Mondal notes that "Ghosh illustrates how [the] environment is exploited, but he also documents its resistance" (114). Outside of these succinct references to the environment, Mondal's text primarily focuses on, as the author himself notes, Ghosh's "exploration of knowledge, science and rationality" and "Ghosh's meditation on questions of identity, colonialism, religion, and nationalism," as well as the "engagement with history and historiography" (39). This broad and authoritative study focuses on Ghosh's most acclaimed pieces of fiction, and it offers a thorough look at major themes in the work with an approach to the fiction as characteristically postmodern (Mondal 20-21). The chapter focusing on *The Glass Palace* notes that "the dynamics that shape the characters' lives in [the novel] are played out in both the economic and political fields," and Mondal continues by asserting that "the novel demonstrates how the economic and the political were two sides of the same colonial coin and it explicitly figures economic exploitation of land, resources and people as a counterpart to political oppression" (113-114). While Mondal's treatment of this relationship focuses more on the "performance of identity" he grazes the connection between the environment and imperialism. I intend to advance this argument by

emphasizing the ways in which Ghosh's twenty-first-century fiction specifically refracts the history of this experience in order to, as Ghosh himself suggests "[determine how the past is to be remembered"]⁵⁵ I maintain that *The Glass Palace* offers multiple Neo-anticolonial Refractions that not only reveal something about the past, but, more importantly, casts an image to tell us about our present and future and the relationship between epochs. The novel at hand does so via an engagement with what DeLoughrey and Handley would term an "Aesthetic of Earth" in an effort to push beyond the limitations that exist with extant postcolonial and environmental discourse. While DeLoughrey and Handley's collection does not offer any treatment of *The Glass Palace*, the section that follows moves to illustrate how Ghosh's text, through its Neo-anticolonial Refractions, images the necessary connections the scholars begin to approach in *Postcolonial Ecologies*.

4.2 Environmental Sites of Resistance

As Ghosh attempts to give voice to nature, it is through the movements of the underclass boy, and ultimately his progeny, that we see the landscape. Just as we are introduced to Rajkumar, we also witness his first experience with "a straight road" (4). The image of this straight road, juxtaposed with the image of a sinuous and iridescent river, is the moment Ghosh begins the relationship between empire and the environment. The novel begins, "There was only one person in the food-stall who knew exactly what that sound was that was rolling in across the plain, along the silver curve of the Irrawaddy" (3). Here, the Neo-anticolonial Refractions occur as the privileging of the underclass perspective is coupled with the portrayal of the environment as character. That Rajkumar, an adolescent, was the sole individual who could identify the sound of English cannons booming through the forest and down the river, begins a complicated depiction of an individual who emerges as a participant in empire-building, initially, as a victim

and then as a profiteer. Furthermore, as noted, his engagement with empire is tied to the changing environmental landscape and the war over, among other things, natural resources. Ghosh foreshadows Rajkumar's exploitative role, when, in speaking about Indian soldiers of the British army, Rajkumar's mentor Saya John asks "How do you fight an enemy who fights from neither enmity nor anger, but in submission to orders from superiors, without protest and without conscience?" (30). Saya John goes on to describe the sepoy as "ghostly men" and "trusting boys" and their boyhood is juxtaposed with Rajkumar's "unusual" boyhood and "watchful determination" (30). This noting of this difference is the first instance that sets Rajkumar apart; he is also set apart in the way that Ghosh depicts him flanked by changing nature. On the boy's first walk to the city of Mandalay he and the straight road are framed by "bamboo-walled shacks and palmed-thatched shanties, pats of dung and piles of refuse" (4). The text continues this refraction—always marking Rajkumar's experiences with nature or extreme changes in nature or even noting his entrance into the regional market (and arguably what is the world market) with instances linked to the use or destruction of the environment.

The experiences of Rajkumar's offspring and peers are also indicative of a struggle with nature. We are told that the boy's mentor, Saya John, was profiting from supporting the trade in teak. Saya John strikes Rajkumar as European in his sensibilities, and Ghosh depicts him as a local aide to empire. Furthermore, the man endures attacks from the environment as he attempts to travel to the teak camps:

It was a ritual with Saya John, a kind of superstition, always to start these journeys in European clothes: a sola topee, leather boots, khaki trousers...but no matter how much he took care, Saya John's costume never survived long intact: the undergrowth would

come alive as they passed by, leeches unfurling like tendrils as they awoke to the warmth of passing bodies. Being the most heavily clothed in the party, it was Saya John who invariably reaped the richest of these bloody harvests. (67)

It is as if, in a response to boring of the forest and the wrenching of teak trees, the leeches plague and infect the profiteers, and in particular, they attack the individual who is most representative of empire. Ghosh continues by depicting the harvesting of teak in which “the trees, once picked, had to be killed and left to dry, for the density of teak is such that it will not remain afloat while its heartwood is moist” (69). His personification of the trees follows when he writes “the assassinated trees were left to die where they stood, sometimes for three years or even more” (69). Yet, even the dying trees resist the colonial and capitalist trade:

Dead though they were, the trees would sound great tocsins of protest as they fell, unloosing thunderclap explosions that could be heard miles away, bringing down everything in their path, rafts of saplings, looped nets of rattan. Thick stands of bamboo were flattened in moments, thousands of jointed limbs exploding simultaneously in deadly splinter blasts, throwing up mushroom clouds of debris. (69)

The environment, as character, is further emphasized as Ghosh continues with a genealogical discussion of the teak and gives Rajkumar, a boy for whom family is center, the opportunity to reflect on the familial legacy of the tree. He immediately juxtaposes this image with the picture of a colonial trader, and he portrays Saya John’s admiration of what he sees as the English man’s European qualities and business acumen. In this moment the text casts a Neo-

anticolonial Refraction in which we see the colonized embark on a journey to participate in the capitalist project as benefactors. The anticolonial work of Frantz Fanon speaks to the native intellectual who “fails to recognise that he is utilising techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger in his country. He contents himself with stamping these instruments with a hall-mark which he wishes to be national, but which is strangely reminiscent of exoticism” (*Wretched* 180). Similarly, we see Saya John and Rajkumar operating in this regard; however, the Neo-anticolonial Refraction would portray them as *native capitalists*⁵⁶. Thus their efforts to engage with the local (or traditional, as in the case of the native intellectual) material, they effectively produce a perversion of the custom of using teak via their decimation of the forest.

When Saya says to Rajkumar, “That is someone you can learn from. To bend the work of nature to your will; to make the trees of the earth useful to human beings” he is effectively opposing his people⁵⁷ as Fanon would suggest (75). In a stroke of irony, the novel itself, and Ghosh’s attempt to tell the story of the Indo-Burmese and the South Asian diaspora, also functions in this way. Considering the composition of the novel as a type of Fanonian native intellectualism offers a Neo-anticolonial Refraction that questions the very function of *The Glass Palace*. While this discussion is outside of the scope of this chapter, it is important to note that the paradox of the novel and the contradictions which emerge thus also exist within the world of the text. *The Glass Palace*, read with a Neo-anticolonial lens, connects the exploitation of the earth and nature as a crime linked with capitalism and the expansion of empire. This refraction also bears witness to a change in Rajkumar; a desire to participate in shaping of the land and space becomes immediately appealing to him and thus begins his transformation as a perpetrator of empire-building.

Even as his experience with the teak trade and agents of empire increases, Rajkumar does not heed the warnings nature gives him such as when one of his peers is crushed to death by an “obstinate log” during the teak transport; instead, he continues to pursue business opportunities (98). Repeatedly Ghosh’s text presents the environment in a war with the colonizer, and Rajkumar is witness to many of these instances. The novel also portrays the environment in a battle with itself, and the text’s landscape begins to mirror the lives of the people as it resists and succumbs to the colonizer and as it rages fights with itself. The novel tells us that, while carrying the miles of teak lumber, the rivers became violent spaces as they streamed into one another:

The river was by now a swollen, angry torrent, racked by clashing currents and pock-marked with whirlpools. When the feeder streams slammed head-on into the river, two-ton logs were thrown cartwheeling into the air; fifty-foot tree trunks were sent shooting across the water like flat-bottomed pebbles. The noise was that of an artillery barrage, with the sound of the detonations carrying for miles into the hinterland. (120)

This and other reactions by the environment suggest a sustained resistance, however, the earth succumbs at times, particularly at the hand of the colonizer. We are told of the oozing “earth-oil” in “one of the few places in the world where petroleum seeped naturally to the surface of the earth” (122). Contrasting images of the local and colonial workers of these oil-wells paint a picture of the difference in the relationship between indigenous community members and the land and colonial enterprisers. The texts tell us that “generations [of] families had attached themselves to individual springs and pools gathering the oil in the buckets and basins, and

ferrying it to nearby towns” (123). After the wells had been worked for years individuals would have to be lowered into the wells. This serene image is contrasted with the presence of European and American foreigners whose tools and equipment with “huge mechanical beaks hammered ceaselessly on the earth” to retrieve the oil (123). Rajkumar’s reflections at this earth-oil foretell the global dependency on petroleum. He muses, “What would it be like to drown in that ooze? To feel that green sludge, the color of insects’ wings, closing over your head, trickling into your ears and nostrils?” (123). The image of someone drowning in petroleum offers a Neo-anticolonial Refraction which shows the capitalism that links diverse eras and regions, and it further signals the relationship of empire-building and the twenty-first-century dependence on oil. This is also the moment we see the trajectory of Rajkumar’s life and career shift. When he observes white oil contractors surveying and buying wells, we see a desire to earn money and own property developing in him. It is at this point that Rajkumar considers joining the recruitment and trade of indentured servants. What is to become his little empire is started with the indenturing of fifty-eight men and women and it solidifies his participation in empire-building (128). The novel details Rajkumar’s business transactions and financial status, and he chronicles Rajkumar’s efforts to learn the English language and manners. Repeatedly, we are presented with an image of Rajkumar adapting to or transforming into a capitalist. His participation in the trade of teak and his complacency with wartime British troops further locates him as a local antagonist on the stage of empire. However, it is his dealings with the recruitment and trade of indentured laborers that catapults him into a bonafide capitalist.

Once Rajkumar emerges as a powerful business man, first as owner of a lumber yard and ultimately as a rubber planter, we see him shift from being merely an observer of the conflict between empire and environment to become a contender in the fight. He and his mentor Saya

John embark on a plan to establish a rubber plantation in Malaya, but clearing the land would prove difficult; we are told it was “like a battlefield, with the jungle fighting back every inch of the way” (201). Rajkumar would engage this battle at every juncture in his life, and by the second decade of the twentieth century his plantation (where he is a partner with Saya John and Matthew, Saya’s son) continues to resist exploitation.

On a visit around the plantation Uma, a well-known anticolonial activist and friend of the family, is told by Matthew that the trees are fighting back. He tells her that the tree-tappers “know that there are trees that won’t do what the others do [and] are fighting back” (233). Matthew continues by exclaiming that “every bit of [his empire] is fighting back...[i]t’s nature: the nature that made these trees and the nature that made us”(233). This interaction forms a refraction in the text that complicates the binary of oppressor and oppressed. The young man’s words reconfirm the personification of the land, the trees, the nature all around, and acknowledges a war between empire and environment where the players account for membership on all sides. Uma is less concerned with the idea of a fighting environment, but her observations of the indentured laborers at the rubber plantation leave her unsettled and call to her mind “something archaic, a manner of life that she had believed to be fortunately extinct” (231). She bemoans the experience and says, “it was like watching something that no longer existed: I was put in mind of the American South before the Civil War, of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” (231). Uma, the widow of an Indian Colonial Officer initially stands as somewhat of an anomaly in the text. She is an independent woman, inheritor of a sizeable pension, someone who traveled across Europe, lived in England and the United States, and is involved in global Anticolonial politics. She is even an exception for the author. Ghosh says that “in every book you come across characters who just go in their own direction. In Uma’s case it really was like that” (Aldama 87). He

continues by describing Uma as an activist carrying the legacy of similar Indian women who were anti-imperialist and drawing on “a general ethos of Anticolonialism” (88). Uma’s linking of American slavery with indentured servitude in Southeast Asia, as well as her need to be an activist for women, is another example of how *The Glass Palace* offers as a Neo-anticolonial Refractions that image linked histories of oppression.

4.3 Colonized as Participants in Capitalism

The novel’s depiction of the force between Rajkumar and Uma further emphasizes the struggle and indicts the plantation owner as we see him adopt the rhetoric of empire. When he debates Uma, she tells him, in reference to his role in the recruitment of indentured people, “It’s people like you who’re responsible for this tragedy. Did you ever think of the consequences when you were transporting people here? What you and your kind have done is far worse than the worst deeds of the Europeans” (247). Rajkumar’s response further steps him in the role of oppressor. He says, “have you ever built anything? Given a single person a job? Improved anyone’s life in any way?” (248). Even though Rajkumar speaks as if he is outside of Empire, his line of questioning serves to validate his role as a plantation owner and he moves to justify his exploitation of others in terms of economic opportunity and expansion. This instance casts a refraction in the text and reveals the conflict whereby capitalism and its exploitation of others is presented as progressive, ambitious, and forward-moving. While Rajkumar does not see his role as a spoke on the wheel of empire, the text’s Neo-anticolonial Refractions makes it very clear that he functions in that way. In a further refraction, *The Glass Palace* illustrates the interconnectedness of world issues when we are told that capitalism, and specifically the rubber plantations of Malaya, would play a role in the coming world war⁵⁸:

No more than anyone else in the world, did either of them have any inkling that the killing [of the Grand Duke Ferdinand] in Sarajevo would spark a world war. Nor did they know that rubber would be a vital strategic material in this conflict; that in Germany the discarding of articles made of rubber would become an offense punishable by law; that submarines would be sent overseas to smuggle rubber; that the commodity would come to be valued more than ever before, increasing their wealth beyond their most extravagant dreams. (201)

While the text initially privileges Rajkumar's underclass voice, it becomes less reliable as he becomes more entwined with the projects of empire. The text emphasizes the degree to which Rajkumar's capitalist mode is imbedded in his sense of self and survival. As he and his wife Dolly, along with his daughter-in-law and grandchild Jaya escape on foot from Malaya to India, Rajkumar, in his state of destitution, preserves some amount of capital. On their journey with other refugees, firewood becomes a commodity and Rajkumar becomes its greatest dealer. The image of Rajkumar foraging for twigs is contrasted with his history in the teak lumber trade:

Rajkumar would get angry if they lost any part of their trove of firewood. It was he who collected most of it. He'd keep watch as they walked and every now and again he'd spot a branch or some twigs that had escaped the notice of the tens of thousands of people who had gone ahead of them...in the evenings, when they stopped he would walk into the jungle and come back carrying armloads of firewood. Most of the refugees were afraid of leaving the

trail...Rajkumar went anyway; he said that they could not afford for him to do otherwise. The firewood was their capital, their only asset. At the end of the day it was this wood that Rajkumar bartered for food—there were always people who needed wood; rice and dal were no use without fire to cook them. (470)

Thus, despite his family's suffering and diminished status, Rajkumar remains entrenched in the capitalist structure. This event, and its stark contrast Rajkumar's experience in the teak trade with Saya John, presents a Neo-anticolonial Refraction which makes clear the tenuousness of the native capitalist.

4.4 Shifting Lenses and Relocating Power

Later on, with the advent of the Second World War, we see the legitimizing of underclass perspectives of those who are resistant to both the British Empire and the enemies of the Allied forces. Uma's nephew Arjun, who is an officer for the British army, hides out in a culvert with his batman near the rubber plantations of Malaya. In order to survive he wedges his body into a cramped space lying next to the man who serves him. Here, listening to Kishan Singh's reflections on military service to the oppressive empire, Arjun stumbles upon a revelation: "how was it possible that Kishan Singh—uneducated, unconscious of his motives—should be more aware of the past than he" (431). Here, the text shapes characters that are somewhat marginal in their respective spheres and depicts their clarity and sense of awareness. In particular, the narrative suggests that there are particular individuals marked with the authority to narrate a history. This Neo-anticolonial Refraction is most present in the interactions of Rajkumar's son Dinu, a shy, introverted polio survivor who sees his world through the lens of a camera. Dinu's use of a lens, from which we primarily see his world, is especially poignant. The images

captured by his camera almost always form a Neo-anticolonial Refraction, and thus his work, in some ways, functions as an exemplar for this Neo-anticolonial paradigm. Not only is Dinu depicted as the compassionate artist, he is also the opposite of his father in that his relationship with the resisting environment is harmonious. Upon visiting the rubber plantation, Dinu ventures into the forest to photograph the overgrown ruins of what might have been a temple. The text presents images of nature still in a fight; however, the interactions with Dinu and the landscape are markedly different. As he moves through the forest, dragging his aching right leg, the physical evidence of polio, toward a stream, the space opens up and presents “a boulder that was so shaped as to serve perfectly for a seat” (335). Still there is evidence of an environment in turmoil:

A banyan had taken root within the temple, and in growing, had pushed the walls apart, carrying away adjoining blocks of masonry. A doorway had been split in two, as though a bomb had exploded on the threshold. One stone post had been knocked over while another had been carried off, coiled in a tangle of greenery, to a distance of several feet off the ground. (335)

While the ruins are in the vicinity of the rubber plantation and its brutal exploitation of people and trees, the forest within and around the ruins are less conflicted. Dinu photographs the area repeatedly, and eventually we are told that “his intimacy with the ruins deepened” (335). His relationship with the environment shapes his view of the plantation, and upon returning to that “monochrome orderliness of the plantation...he felt himself to be passing into a territory of ruin, a defilement much more profound than temporal decay” (336). Dinu’s return to the plantation offers a Neo-anticolonial Refraction that allows him, and ultimately the reader via the

character's lens, to see the vulgarity of the plantation; it ultimately drives the character further into the forest and ruins. Unlike Dinu, his brother Neel followed Rajkumar's footsteps into the family business, and the battle with the environment is ultimately played out in his death—crushed by logs in his father's teak timberyard. The capitalist pursuit, including the advancement of war, is met with opposition from nature, while the artist who has no exploitative endeavors is met with approval. Yet, Ghosh's novel does not offer even lines. The character Dinu continues to suffer the pain of his childhood disease, and his disability is ever-present and affects his movement throughout the narrative. This fact raises questions about the artist's role, and, in particular, the role of the novelist in shaping Neo-anticolonial Refractions.

The Glass Palace considers the role of the artist in times of war and empire-building through the depiction of Rajkumar's son Dinu, Ghosh suggests that there is a limiting disability that affects the artist whose work responds to, or chronicles the effects of, imperialism. He is depicted as honorable or even innocent, and through his lens, and in this case it is both literal and figurative, we see the complexities of empire-building. Dinu, as a photographer and artist, as noted, has a distinct and direct relationship to the environment. However, unlike his father, Dinu's work aims to capture and photographically preserve the landscape. In one way, the text suggests a futility in the work of the artist as Dinu disappears for many years while the story of the plantation slowly disappears. Still, the novel suggests that the writing of this history and the chronicling and collecting all the pieces of the narrative puzzle are left to the future generations. The novel closes with the granddaughter of Rajkumar, who is also grandniece of Uma, searching out her uncle Dinu, visiting the detainment site of the Burmese Royal family in India, and attempting to cull the stories of her family and their acquaintances. Her search and reflections on the past only come to fruition in what is presented as a memoir (effectively the novel) written by

her son, presumably at the turn of the new century. His story is anchored by a memory of an intimate, and as he tells it, “the most tender, most moving sight I have ever seen” between his great-great-aunt Uma and his great-great-grandfather Rajkumar. This picture of the old capitalist and the radical activist is, in itself, a Neo-anticolonial Refraction, and it produces a complex narrative of empire and its role in the lives of individuals and communities. Whether we are to view this understanding as a commentary on the collusion of Anticolonialists with capitalists late in the twentieth century or as a meaningful reconciliation is not entirely clear. After all, the novel depicts Uma’s and Rajkumar’s strife as having been mooted by the loss of their family members. Yet, the story around Rajkumar’s illegitimate son Ilongo seems to form some kind of answer here. On her visit to the rubber plantation Uma heard the story of Ilongo’s conception—repeated rapes by Rajkumar—from the boy’s mother. Although Rajkumar was never brought to justice and the boy was never afforded the legacy of his father, the novel presents this casualty (and he and his mother are clearly presented as victims—first of indentureship, rape, and ultimately labor exploitation) as a place for an activist shift to socialism. We learn that after the war Ilongo became “one of the most important trade-unionists in the country—something of a legend in the plantations. He had founded a co-operative and had raised enough money to buy the Morningside plantation...and had been responsible for health-care systems, pensions, educational programme, worker-retraining projects” (497-498). In what is the most telling Neo-anticolonial Refraction of the text, Ilongo effectively claimed his birthright for himself *and* for all those who lived and worked the so-called “coolie lines” of Malaya. This refraction offers the possibility for a shift in the power dynamics and the capitalist practices that once governed the region. In this moment the text presents a markedly nationalist instance, and, as Anshuman A. Mondal argues, illustrates “Ghosh’s sympathies with anti-colonial nationalism as an

emancipatory force in the modern world...yet [one that] is bound up in a larger defeat because I is complicit in the logic of a universal Western modernity to which all peoples can and should aspire” (123). Likewise, these echoes of anti-colonial nationalism, so prevalent in the work of Frantz Fanon, find their way into the work of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. As in Ghosh’s work, however, the anticolonial foundation of Adichie’s novel reveals a Neo-anticolonial possibility through its refractions.

4.5 Nation-building and the Legacy of Empire

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* also explores the role of the artist in a region rife with war and, in this case, the story is presented in a space overwhelmed by the struggle of a post-colonial nation-building that is reminiscent of the onset of colonialism. The novel is set in Nigeria during the Biafran War, and it depicts the regional, cultural, economic, and religious strife among the various community groups. The narrative mainly traces the lives of Igbo twin sisters Olanna and Kainene, their families and partners, university professors, and in particular, the so-called houseboy, Ugwu. Adichie’s text takes on the question of authority in this context and it explores who is qualified to tell or write these people’s stories. Like Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace*, Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents Neo-anticolonial Refractions through the portrayal of sites of resistance amongst academics and elsewhere and the indictment of decolonization-era patriots and their imperial mimicry. It is her privileging of the underclass perspective, however, that casts the most significant Neo-anticolonial Refraction. Read with a Neo-anticolonial lens, Adichie’s novel reveals itself as working to portray the history of marginalized people even as it anticipates the twenty-first century ramifications of that experience. The text also echoes Fanon’s work and ideas, and it takes to task the native capitalist who also made marks in Ghosh’s novel. As in *The Glass Palace*, Adichie’s native capitalist

serves to form a broader refraction about the ability for capitalism to swell and expand in a colonial/former colonial space—functioning under the guise of progress. The juxtaposition of the native capitalist with the underclass voice of authority presents an issue germane to a larger focus of Neo-anticolonialism: that is the ever-present struggle over power and the bitter dynamic between academic freedom and capitalist motives. Certainly the privileged academic is not considered an underclass, and especially not in Adichie’s narrative. However, the presence of the underclass lens, the oppositional academic, and the native capitalist creates a nuanced dynamic in which roles are not fixed and power is often fleeting. Adichie herself has spoken of, what she calls, “the danger of a single story.”⁵⁹ In a much circulated recording of her talk at the TED Global Conference, Adichie said, “...the single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”⁶⁰ Adichie’s insistence on presenting the numerous and varied stories has become a hallmark of her writing; however, her treatment of Nigeria, specifically Nigerian history and women, is most regarded by scholars of her work. To date, there exists only one book-length study, *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Aesthetics of Commitment and Narrative*, by Allwell Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu. Daria Tunca of the University of Liège in Belgium has compiled a remarkable bibliography of primary and secondary sources and made them available on the “Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Website”.⁶¹ The range of scholarship on the young writer includes numerous essays on her first novel *Purple Hibiscus* and several works that deal with issues of national identity in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Others like the work of Elleke Boehmer, deal with Chinua Achebe’s legacy and influence on the new cadre of Nigerian writers like Adichie. Achebe has, in a way, handed the proverbial torch to Adichie saying that she “has the gift of ancient storytellers.”⁶² The author does, in fact, take on stories and themes that connect us to

major historical moments, but she also captures the individual lives that experienced and made that history; and her writing shows how that history and those lives are directly connected to a present reality. In “Biafra and the Aesthetics of Closure in the Third Generation Nigerian Novel”, Madhu Krishnan explores the absence of closure in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and suggests that the novel’s open-endedness is characteristic of the aesthetic of the third-generation Nigerian novel. Krishnan further argues that, “By refusing the narrative compulsion of closure and tidy endings, these narratives and their representation of individuals and conflicts highlight the importance of continued negotiation and interrogation necessary in the postcolonial condition” (194). A Neo-anticolonial read of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* reveals that the novel’s “continued negotiation and interrogation” is specifically directed at the links between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and particularly in the ways that capitalism has shaped and continues to shape our lived experiences. The current, and mostly sparse, scholarship on Adichie’s second novel continues to read it within the realm of twentieth-century postcolonial criticism, thus offering a limited view of the novel’s potential. Susan Strehle’s article “Producing Exile: Diasporic Vision in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” explores the trauma of war and the creating of a group whose diasporic experience is rife with loss. Strehle considers the “diasporic vision” of the three figures whose perspectives drive the novel: Ugwu, Olanna, and Richard. However, her situating Richard as “the most visibly diasporic of the witnesses” neglects to engage the complexity of inter- and intra-national diaspora during the civil war (664). The article empowers Richard’s “vision” and effectively inverts the novel’s effort to privilege the underclass lens.

4.6 Privileging the Underclass Lens

In an interview about the novel, Adichie said that she “wanted to make a strongly-felt political point about who should be writing the stories of Africa”.⁶³ This Neo-anticolonial stance is repeated by the author and is also followed throughout *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie refuses to turn the narrative over to the white British writer who has come to Nigeria to lecture at Nsukka University and write a book about the Nigerian people. This intentional placement of an outsider attempting to narrate the lives of the community coupled with his immediate dismissal demonstrates Adichie’s placement of authority and authorship in the hands to the people living the story. While Richard Churchill eagerly tries to write and capture the stories of the Nigerian and Biafran people, he continuously faces blocks in his writing; in many ways, Richard represents a contemporary class of well-meaning liberal whites eager to collect stories of the other. We are told that he was drawn to Nigeria by the unearthing of iron artifacts, and Adichie conjures up references to colonial-era gazing and piracy. In addition to limiting Richard’s ability to chronicle the Biafran war, Adichie frames a narrative within the larger story and places the authorship in the hands of the most unlikely character. In that way, the novel troubles the Fanonian concept of the native intellectual: at once the white outsider and the local academic are both denied the role of storyteller. Hugh Hodges, in his article “Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction” notes that in the “novel the war is perceived not from the privileged perspective of the international observer or even of the informed elite, but from the perspective of someone with little access to the facts” (8).

This is particularly important as the emphasis is placed on the experience of war and the consequences on the ground instead of the so-called facts of the conflict. Adichie portrays the divergence between the reported facts and the actual truth of wartime experiences when the

narrative introduces American reporters to the war-torn region. Their observations lie in direct contrast to the young houseboy who will eventually relay the story.

The novel opens as we are introduced to Ugwu, who is being led by his aunt to work as a houseboy in the home of Odenigbo, a professor at Nsukka University. She instructs her nephew how to behave in the professor's home. She says, "I told Master you will learn everything fast...Remember, what you will answer whenever he calls you is, *Yes, sah!*" (4). Ugwu is initially presented as the most subordinated character. He comes to Odenigbo's house under his aunt's instructions, which include a vocabulary of colonial service and a posture to match. The thirteen year-old Ugwu initially keeps his face down and his eyes averted. However, Adichie begins and ends the novel with Ugwu, and he is given equal footing on the page. Each chapter departs from the perspective of Ugwu, Olanna, or Richard, beginning and often following that order, and each character has roughly one-third of the book's chapters. Richard, the Englishman, has only eleven, as opposed to the twelve chapters each that belong to Olanna and Ugwu, and Adichie reveals major characters through Ugwu, as in the case of his "Master" Odenigbo. Furthermore, each of the three characters appears to have a particular domain in the text that is specifically tied to their perspective and position. Ugwu's position reveals the majority of unheard narratives, while Richard's sections are indicative of a European gaze. For example, most of the chapters beginning with Richard shed some light on, not only the British perspective and presence in Nigeria, but also, the global and specifically American outlook and practices which had already begun to shape the new world order. Still, even with such clear demarcations, the dynamic of power in the novel is still very malleable.

Chapter three brings Richard into the novel and this introduction portrays him amidst a community of expatriates, including his partner Susan. While Adichie situates Richard in this

realm, the author does not create a solid binary between colonizer and colonized or European and African. Her nuanced depiction problematizes such a dichotomy and reveals the complexities of individual lives. Even though Richard is initially depicted in the expatriate collective, we are told that “he felt awkward with the men” (53). It is not clear, however, where Richard’s discomfort and incompatibility with the men is rooted. We are told that:

They were mostly English, ex-colonial administrators and business people from John Holt and Kingsway and GB Ollivant and Shell-BP and United African Company. They were reddened from sun and alcohol. They chuckled about how tribal Nigerian politics was, and perhaps these chaps were not quite so ready to rule themselves after all. They discussed cricket, plantations they owned or planned to own, the perfect weather in Jos, business opportunities in Kaduna. (53)

They represent a persistent colonial presence which was in direct contrast with Richard’s interest in Nigeria as a writer and artist. Later on, however, Adichie explores Richard’s role as functioning in a similar vein as the ex-colonials. These glimpses of European voices occur in brief clips throughout the text and mainly occur in the sections that start with Richard. They are constrained by the narrative of an outsider and are thus presented as unreliable voices. Instead, and in a Neo-Anticolonial frame, the novel relies on the voices of Ugwu and Olanna to relay the story of a people suffering. More importantly, those accounts work to depict a resistance and an activism that emerges from the underclass. Thus, through numerous refractions the text itself presents as Neo-Anticolonial in its effort to privilege unheard voices, and the characters themselves operate in a Neo-Anticolonial framework in their drive to overcome oppression.

When we are introduced to Ugwu in the first chapter, the strangeness and unfamiliarity of the colonized space is emphasized. Adichie depicts Ugwu—his body and his mind—in conflict with this space. This initial opposition sets him up to function as the bringer of the voice of the suffering. Still, Ugwu’s resistance would not completely materialize until he peeled off the remnants of his colonial development (or underdevelopment). Adichie’s choice of Ugwu for this particular role bears further consideration. Although the boy arrives, and under the tutelage of his aunt, performs the appropriate rituals of submission, his lack of experience in that mode further situates him as the courier of the narrative of resistance. Walking to Odenigbo’s house, Ugwu’s feet meet the aggressive paved road, and he wonders if his aunt “could feel the coal tar getting hotter underneath, through [the] thin soles” of her slippers (3). As his body experiences the paved road, a clear marker of British imperialism in Nigeria, his mind also engages that very presence. We are told that as he and his aunt “went past a sign, ODIM STREET [...] Ugwu mouthed *street*, as he did whenever he saw an English word that was not too long” (3). This action, while it depicts his tongue as somewhat resistant to the word, marks Ugwu’s first instance of claiming the language of the colonizer and it prepares him for his future as the narrator of his people’s experience. As the novel opens with what is arguably a Neo-anticolonial Refraction—Ugwu’s leaving the village into the “colony” of a recently-independent Nigeria—the scene points to the hierarchy of power and the cultural hegemony which links the experiences of the Igbo boy and the Igbo professor. Later on when he enters Odenigbo’s house, Ugwu is met by glass, cement, and white curtains and is overcome by a need to retreat to his mother’s thatch roof hut. His familiarization with the contents of the house also foreshadows Ugwu’s authority as storyteller. Adichie writes:

The room was silent except for the rustle of Master's page turning. Ugwu stood for a while before he began to edge closer and closer to the bookshelf, as though to hide in it, and then, after a while, he sank down to the floor cradling his raffa bag between his knees. He looked up at the ceiling, so high up, so piercingly white. He closed his eyes and tried to reimagine this spacious room with the alien furniture, but he couldn't. He opened his eyes, overcome by a new wonder, and looked around to make sure it was all real. (5)

This section, depicting Ugwu in Odenigbo's study, serves to locate the young boy within the realm of author. His proximity to the books, and the suggestion that it could be a shield from the imposing non-traditional house, begins to re-position Ugwu from the role of servant to that of master of a narrative. In this instance, Adichie, like Ghosh as author, becomes a subject in the larger refraction created by the text. In her positioning Ugwu as storyteller in the realm of Odenigbo's texts, Adichie herself seems to fall into the role of native intellectual. We must ask, however, whether or not her privileging of Ugwu—who would fit into Fanon's peasant class⁶⁴ works to mitigate the irony of her position as writer. Does Ugwu's inability to imagine the room and its contents suggest that he, and thus his reflection on Biafra and Nigeria, was not polluted by the presence of empire?

Later, we see Ugwu experience an array of lives from his initial role as a houseboy to caretaker for Odenigbo's child, refugee from war, teacher, son and brother, boy-soldier, rapist, war hero, refugee-camp worker, and eventually writer. The range of his experiences further authorizes him to tell the stories of suffering and survival during the Biafra-Nigeria war. The space created in Ugwu's chapters also functions as a place for the most subjugated individuals.

Section three of the novel, beginning with the second of the “Late Sixties” section, portrays Ugwu’s interaction with Amala the young girl carrying Odenigbo’s child. The girl, who was brought to Nsukka by Odenigbo’s mother, had been impregnated by the drunken man when his mother sent her in to his room. Before her pregnancy, the young girl was nearly invisible in the text, and did not occupy any space in the house. Later, however, we are told that, “Amala sat in the living room. Her pregnancy had elevated her, so she could sit idly listening to the radiogram, no longer Mama’s help but now the woman who would give birth to Mama’s grandchild” (238). Despite her apparent status change, Amala remains a subaltern⁶⁵ figure. We never hear Amala talk of her needs or desires, and she only appears briefly in Ugwu’s section in what is most certainly a desperate act—an utterance of the subaltern:

The afternoon Mama left, Ugwu found Amala in the vegetable garden, crouched on the ground with her knees drawn up, arms around her legs. She was chewing peppers...Amala said nothing for a while; she spoke so seldom that her voice always surprised Ugwu by how childishly high it was. ‘Pepper can remove pregnancy,’ she said... ‘If you eat plenty of hot peppers, they will remove pregnancy.’ She was huddled in the mud like a pathetic animal, chewing slowly, tears streaming down her face. (239)

This scene suggests that the girl was not a willing participant in Mama Odenigbo’s plan to get a grandchild by her son. Even more importantly, the young girl’s ignorant attempt to rid herself of the pregnancy further situates her as unheard and unseen. That no one would have recognized her need to escape the situation leaves Amala helpless. It is not until Amala gives birth, in effect expelling the shackle of this relationship, that we see her agency. This moment is

depicted in Olanna's chapter and seems to reconfirm Olanna as an empowered woman, but it also casts a Neo-anticolonial Refraction that shows the women as linked under the oppression of capitalist patriarchy. In contrast to Olanna's experience where her class enables her to resist her father's planned suitors, Amala is forced to succumb to the plans for her body. Again, Adichie troubles what, at first, seem like clear lines of power. Olanna frees Amala of the burden of the infant, but only after Amala refuses to eat and refuses the child. Adichie creates a space for Amala to exert some control over her life, but she ultimately remains a subaltern figure, disappearing from the text after enacting a resistance against the only person less powerful than herself—the newborn infant. In this moment we are also given some indications about the nature of the interaction between Amala and Odenigbo. The text tells us that, "she never once looked at Odenigbo" and that "what she must feel for him was an awed fear" (250). We also learn that "she had not said no to Odenigbo because she had not even considered that she could say no. Odenigbo made a drunken pass and she submitted willingly and promptly: He was the master, he spoke English, he had a car. It was the way it should be" (250). This section exposes Odenigbo, but it also uncovers Olanna and subsequently reveals the inequity between the existence of men and women. The refraction cast in this section reveals the extent to which the native bourgeoisie⁶⁶ serves to maintain the system of dominance that originated with the onset of colonization and further rooted itself in the neo-colonial project. When Olanna decides to adopt the infant, she tells her sister "she was so helpless. I felt as if I knew her" (252). We can assume the "she" to be Amala. This connection between the women suggests that the de-colonized and independent Nigeria still functions as a hostile place for women, and the novel's presentation of the paradoxical and often tragic lives of the people in the world of the text offer small moments of resistance and tiny glimpses from the underclass lens. This intentional depiction of the

eclipsed voices, coupled with an action that responds to the needs of that silenced voice and individual, is precisely a function of Neo-Anticolonialism in the text. Moreover, the depiction of the story from the underclass perspective, and particularly as that figure's lens and even identity changes as a result of that positioning, further solidifies the text as Neo-anticolonial. In fact, within Ugwu's framework we begin to see the burgeoning activism in the social and professional peer-group that meets at Odenigbo's house. It also reveals more about the professor and shows his fall into silence and dejection, from the academy to activism, and eventually into a state of near-destitution. The novel carries out such an evolution in the life and story of Ugwu as well, and we see him later on as a teacher during wartime and ultimately as the bearer of his community's stories.

4.7 Sites of Resistance in the Academy and Beyond

Throughout the novel we see Ugwu slowly peel away the vestiges of his colonial knowledge and begin to speak more assuredly upon recognizing his position in the family for which he works. We are told, "Ugwu came to realize...he was not a normal house-boy; Dr. Okeke's houseboy next door did not sleep on a bed in a room, he slept on the kitchen floor. They houseboy at the end of the street with whom Ugwu went to the market did not decide what would be cooked, he cooked whatever he was ordered to" (17). While living with Olanna and Odenigbo, he is exposed to the political debates of the academics on a weekly basis and he works with some autonomy and a sense of importance. More importantly, when Olanna sends him to his room to finish his homework, Ugwu gets the opportunity to immerse himself in Odenigbo's books and attempts to move steadily through the difficult texts. In Odenigbo's house, Ugwu's curiosity for books further develops as he listens to the professor's political debates. Adichie depicts a community of scholars actively engaged in the political discourse of their community,

and she allows the characters to correct the colonial and national history. In a discussion with his colleague we hear Odenigbo argue, “my point is that the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe...I am a Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed *black* to be as different as possible from his *white*. But I was Igbo before the white man came” (20). Ugwu is aware that the debates and conversations hold a great deal of weight for the discussants, but he also recognizes that members of the group are ignorant of things that matter to, and shape the lives of, underclass villagers. Ugwu’s observations frequently produce Neo-anticolonial Refractions, and through his pondering of the limited views of the professor and his peers we see that both the boy and man suffer from a lack of access to certain aspects of their reality. This refraction, formed in Ugwu’s lens, illustrates that these Igbo men are still very much limited by, on the one hand, an urge toward progress, and on the other a clinging to tradition. Frantz Fanon takes on this dilemma in *Wretched of the Earth* and he argues that the colonized “who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope” (187). In that way, the schism between Odenigbo and Ugwu beg for an overt bridging of their already linked histories.

It is arguable that this merging occurs when, through the now-privileged lens of the subservient character Ugwu, Adichie unearths the activist spirit that springs from the well of these scholars’ lives and portrays its evolution into meaningful community action. The narrative does not, however, depict pure, infallible characters. Rather, it presents a group of individuals who carry vestiges of empire even as they attempt to resist that legacy. They participate in the capitalist structure and live with advantages well above the majority of their fellow citizens. They take on issues of importance, but do not begin to act on their beliefs until driven to do so by

war and violence. In fact, and particularly with Odenigbo, their initial acts of goodwill only serve their own interests. This refraction reveals the extent to which individuals inadvertently function to maintain the colonial system of power, thus raising questions about the twenty-first century negotiation of national power.

When Ugwu learns of his mother's illness, Odenigbo takes him to his mother's village so that his evening of entertaining would not be interrupted by Ugwu's absence. On this trip, like many other instances in Ugwu's narrative, we see Odenigbo's character unfold. On one hand the mathematics professor talks about feeding the country and "overcome[ing] this colonial dependence on imports" (88). At other times Ugwu's reflections reveal the futility of Odenigbo's utterances. As Ugwu helps his mother into the car, Odenigbo tells him to step aside so that he can help Ugwu's mother instead—a incident that leaves Ugwu unsettled:

Ugwu wished that Master would not touch his mother because her clothes smelled of age and must, and because Master did not know that her back ached and her cocoyam patch always yielded a poor harvest and her chest was indeed on fire when she coughed...What did Master know about anything anyway, since all he did was shout with his friends and drink brandy at night? (90)

His resentment is filled with shame and pride at the same time, but it also allows the reader to see that Odenigbo's position and knowledge did not qualify him to offer the kind of help he thought he should. This moment unfolds a key aspect of Neo-anticolonialism. That is: any form of advocacy has to occur with a direct engagement with the community for which one works. It requires an engagement beyond gazing onto the community to assess its needs, and instead demands that the campaigner has a deep understanding of said community—an

understanding that is shared by that community. Odenigbo, however, is still set apart from advocates in and for the community. He talks about his students' demonstrating the forged census in Lagos, and he even says "we must speak out!" (89). However, the professor's speaking out is relegated to the study in which he hosts his colleagues for drinks in the evenings. The depiction of Odenigbo's work, as an academic, forms a refraction which elucidates an integral point in the foundation of Neo-Anticolonialism: the experiences marked by inequality and linked by the capitalist project will not be undone by intellectual discourse but through activist work in the community. As war unfolds, Odenigbo endures violence and utter degradation before he emerges as a fighter and community worker. The Neo-anticolonial reading of Adichie's work does not suggest that an academic must endure a career and lifestyle derailed by disempowerment, violence, and hunger in order to engage directly with the suffering. Rather, I contend, the novel illustrates the type of change in outlook that needs to accompany counter-hegemonic approaches. Odenigbo says to Olanna, "the real tragedy of our postcolonial world is not that the majority of people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather, it is that the majority have not been given the tools to *negotiate* this new world" (101). His words contradict and rail against the racist and stereotypical statements made and witnessed by Richard at the expatriate parties and with the American journalists covering the war, and they offer a Neo-anticolonial Refraction that acknowledges an on-going challenge of the current epoch.

While *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents as a Neo-anticolonial story in terms of, particularly, the Igbo characters' resistance to generalizing narratives, Adichie reveals the limits of their resistance in times of war. When the movement for national independence develops, the academics and community leaders become the driving forces in the region that would soon be called Biafra. However, as Hodges notes, "the more the Biafran War becomes a moment in

political history, the less important either politics or history become to Odenigbo, Olanna, Ugwu and the other Biafrans whose lives have been reduced to the permanent present of mere survival” (9). In doing so, Adichie resists idealizing the characters as she portrays them in the midst of their starving, suffering with illness, and the psychological trauma of war time. The novel, however, does not depart from the Neo-anticolonialist mode in favor of depicting total abject despair and suffering. *Half of a Yellow Sun* continues the indictment of the so-called world super powers with the novel’s references to British arms sent to Nigeria for the purpose of bombing and killing Biafrans. The novel emphasizes the neo-colonial presence in the young nation now divided into Nigeria and Biafra, and clearly suggests that the failed movement for Biafran nationhood had as much to do with the global access to oil as it did with inter-tribal conflict.

4.8 Performance and Mimicry in the Parlour

The presence of Brits and Americans touches the novel with moments that indict the European and North American capitalist regimes. However, Adichie, again, explodes the binary of oppressed and oppressor by also incriminating non-white and non-European participants as beneficiaries of empire. The portrayal of these figures’ complicity with empire and the capitalist project offers a Neo-anticolonial Refraction that exposes the degree to which the native capitalist helps to buttress the very system that aims to tear apart the country. The text further compounds the characters’ experiences by depicting the hidden layers of degradation as characters simultaneously oppose and embrace the legacy of English rule. The term “Master” appears in the first chapter as Ugwu is instructed by his aunt to say “Yes, sah!” to Odenigbo (3). The houseboy and his aunt both see this address as a requirement for their roles as servants. Yet, the term Master appears throughout the novel, in Olanna’s and Richard’s sections when they refer to Ugwu, Harrison, and other servants’ relationships with their employers. While *Half of a Yellow*

Sun remains true to the era in this regard, I argue that the repetition of “Master” throughout the text can also be seen as a Neo-anticolonial Refraction: “Master,” as a persistent chorus throughout the text, presents as an enduring inheritance of the colonial era. More importantly, the performance of Odenigbo, as Ugwu’s Master, as well as his membership at the club and his tennis matches, coupled with the eventual breaking down of this hierarchy, signals a Neo-anticolonial change. However, there is not always a transition from mimicry of empire to rejection of that system, nor is there a constant move from performance of power to awareness of others. We see British characters in the text refer to the continent as if it were a monolith, frequently characterizing Africa as a country and stereotyping the Nigerian figures with whom they come in contact. The party of expatriates warned Richard, “The people [are] bloody beggars, be prepared for their body odours and the way they will stand and stare at you on the roads, never believe a hard-luck story, never show weakness to domestic staff” (53-54). Racist ideology permeates the discussions Richard has with his acquaintances, and the narrative sets the writer apart from other white characters in the text. At dinner with her family Olanna notices that “...he did not have that familiar superiority of English people who thought they understood Africans better than Africans understood themselves, and instead, had an endearing uncertainty about him—almost a shyness” (36). Still, even in Richard, the history of empire and white supremacy lingers, and his anger reveals his desire to perform this legacy. When Richard’s servant exposes his infidelity, Richard becomes enraged. Chapter twenty-four begins:

Richard wanted to cane Harrison. It had always appalled him, the thought that some colonial Englishmen flogged elderly black servants. Now, though, he felt like doing just as they had done. He

longed to make Harrison lie down on his belly and flog, flog, flog
him until the man learned to keep his mouth shut. (255)

As Richard negotiates the bequest of empire with his growing love for Olanna's twin sister and the Biafran movement, he often views Kainene via a European lens, offering images that evoke colonial presence. When he first meets Kainene, he observes that "her skin was the colour of Belgian chocolate" (57). Dwelling on her letter to him, Richard "read over and over, lingering on each *I* that was so elaborately curved, it looked like a sterling sign" (150). The things about Kainene that titillate Richard are always placed in a European context. In some ways, this is presented as a consequence of Richard's frame of reference, but I contend that it functions as a refraction and thus signals Kainene's relationship to the capitalist structure. The novel reveals the woman's character primarily through the narratives of her sister Olanna and Richard, her lover, and over the course of several chapters, Kainene emerges as a brazen figure who is resistant to Igbo traditions and also critical of European ways—even as she fully participates. We learn that Olanna "had never liked that Kainene dated so many white men in England" (36). Her penchant for white men complements her role as a savvy businesswoman. We learn of her meetings with her father and their oil company colleagues, and later on we are told that "Her work came first; she was determined to make her father's factories grow, to do better than he had done" (78). Spending her evenings meeting with "company people negotiating deals, government people negotiating bribes, factory people negotiating jobs" begins Kainene's role as a gear in the capitalist machine. Even in the midst of war Kainene is driven to amplify her money working as an army contractor, an importer of stockfish, and eventually the director of a refugee camp in Port Harcourt. When she conveys this to Olanna, Kainene asks, "Are you silently condemning me for profiteering from the war?" (343). Kainene is well-aware of her

position and often criticizes the very function of capitalism in her country. Her awareness and participation appear to be a mode of survival—a sort of necessary evil for a woman in Nigeria, but she is not absolved; and her participation refracts the reach of capitalism.

The twins' parents, however, represent a different, even more tragic, type of player. The novel portrays their internalizing of European ideals and indicts them for perpetuating the legacy of the colonizer on a newly-independent Nigeria. *Half of a Yellow Sun* emphasizes the Anglicization of the young women's parents, and suggests that their idea of decolonization was claiming the European elements embedded in Nigeria. We learn of their mother's entertaining parlour, of their father's decision to send the twins to an exclusive British secondary school because "he was determined that [they] be as European as possible, and we even see Chief Ozobia and his wife perform their colonial identity. More importantly, and in a Neo-anticolonial frame, the novel juxtaposes images of the parents with Olanna's and Kainene's memories of their grandfather. As they are in the midst of war, seeing children starve to death in the refugee camp, the women reminisce that their grandfather would say "it gets worse and then it gets better. *O dikata njo, o dikwa mma*" (390). They also remember his saying "*O gburo m egbu, o mee ka m malu ife*...It did not kill me, it made me knowledgeable" (347). This refraction is distinctly Neo-anticolonial in that it looks back onto a past that is directly linked to the present, in terms of how the path between those two points have been negotiated. Interspersed are not memories of their parents but facts, criticisms, and the recognition that the Ozobias have rejected the prospect of a new Nigeria or a free Biafra. Before fleeing to London at the first sign of war, her mother visits Olanna in Abba where she has taken refuge from the war. She arrives in her Landrover—carrying all her diamonds inside her brassiere—to ask Olanna to accompany them to England:

...your father and I have finalized our plans. We have paid somebody who will take us to Cameroon and get us on a flight from there to London. We will use our Nigerian passports; the Cameroonians will not give us trouble. It was not easy but it is done. We paid for four places. (188)

The narrative depicts a rift between the generations, and the novel's exposure of the Ozobias and its contrasting them with the memory of a grandfather who lived through the onset of colonization, presents a critique of nationalist collusion with the colonizer. Furthermore, the text suggests that the possibility for a positive generational shift away from the colonial legacy is germinating in a resistance to neocolonialism that develops amongst the most downtrodden. Olanna's and Kainene's determination to stay and ultimately become activists in their war-stricken communities reflects their desire to see a new country—a new freedom. Olanna's frequent criticism of her parents' status and ventures places her, however loosely, on the side of the oppressed. When she encounters her mother's caustic chastising of a servant who steals rice and grovels for forgiveness when caught, she tells Odenigbo, in what effects a refraction, that "it repulsed her to see that elderly man abase himself so" (220). She recognizes that the Nigerian people perform their colonial degradation in the new national structures. Shedding greater light on the hypocrisy, she says:

My father and his politician friends steal money with their contracts, but nobody makes them kneel to beg for forgiveness. And they build houses with their stolen money and rent them out to people like this man and charge inflated rents that make it impossible to buy food. (221)

Eschewing the colonial mimicry performed by her parents and enduring violence, hunger, and homelessness during the Biafran War places Olanna and her young peers in a cadre of revolutionaries whose efforts, while ultimately unsuccessful against the British and American interlopers, present the possibility for a new world order. *Half of a Yellow Sun* reaches into the belly of their anguished lives and refracts the Neo-anticolonial strife for a world where members of the intellectual community contribute actively to the betterment of that society.

The novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Amitav Ghosh raise the question: How do we consider our own roles during times of conflict and shifting of the global order? I contend that the twenty-first century work of these writers presents a unique engagement with imperialism in the ways that their return to the histories of colonization and twentieth-century neocolonialism demands a look at the twenty-first century permutations of empire. The texts offer examples of Neo-anticolonialism in terms of how the depictions of the stories and linked histories refract the power of global capitalism particularly in times of conflict. As the novels reveal the ways in which resistance is manifested in people and in the environment—how narratives of history are presented to offer more intimate, complete, and veritable portrayal of experiences, and as players on the colonial and neocolonial field enact or challenge their positions—they call for an interrogation of the contemporary restructuring of global power.

5 TRUE-TRUE: NEW NARRATIVES FROM THE DIASPORA

Truth comes to us from the past, then, like gold washed down from the mountains.

Carter G. Woodson⁶⁷

I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it's for or against.

Malcolm X⁶⁸

She couldn't remember her grandmother's true-true name. But Tee was growing into her grandmother again, her spirit was in me. They'd never bent down her spirit and she would come back and come back and come back...

Merle Hodge⁶⁹

Linda Tuhiwahi Smith, in *Decolonising Methodologies*, calls for a re-visioning and re-historicizing, in which we “tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes” (28). The indigenous researcher also notes that “under colonialism indigenous peoples have struggled against a Western view of history and yet been complicit with that view” (33). This chapter explores how twenty-first-century writers of the Black Diaspora engage in telling narratives which reveal little-known or unengaged stories of the black experience—narratives that disturb that “Western view of history” to offer accounts of the past which depict complicity and resistance. Yet Smith notes that many of the “producers and legitimators of culture are the group most closely aligned to the colonizers in terms of their class interest, their values and their ways of thinking” (69). Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* spoke to this class of elite and educated natives.⁷⁰ I contend, however, that this movement in twenty-first-century writing can be discussed within a Neo-anticolonial framework. Not only do the texts offer multiple counter narratives, they also succeed at dismantling the binary of oppressed and oppressor, and, in doing so, also reveal accounts that inculcate the continuum of players. Authors like Michelle Cliff, via recent novels like *Into the Interior*, retell stories of their people which move against the narrative of the dominant society. Similarly, Jones’s *The Known World*

presents the too often forgotten story of enslavement as a means of profit for a then emerging black middle class. Particularly in the case of Edward P. Jones, we see a culpability of the subjugated class that moves out of bondage. More importantly, within the Neo-anticolonial context, the novels work as refractors in order to improve our visual acuity of history and society. Through Jones's texts we see that the nascent black middle class was complicit with the system of U.S. American Capitalism that would further suppress blacks in the United States. It is worth noting here, Christel Temple's essay "Rescuing the Literary in Black Studies" in which she takes on the conflict that exists between black radicals in Black Studies academic departments and African American literary scholars. She notes that:

Literary topics are not prioritized at most Black studies and African-centered conferences and symposia, and there is a contingent of African-centered scholars that believes literature is not capable of making practical contributions to the struggle to increase the life chances and life experiences of people of African descent. For them, the study of literature is esoteric, myopic, elitist, and unrelated to reality. (767)

Temple insists that this schism is caused by an even greater gap between privileged literary studies departments and Black Studies departments. If Temple's assertions are correct, the opportunity for cultural producers to engage narratives that can offer Neo-anticolonial Refractions is severely limited.

As has been discussed in the past chapters, Neo-anticolonial Refractions in twenty-first-century literature expose the continued and evolving function of capitalism in empire-building and the expansion of power and cultural and economic hegemony. Chapter three looked at the re-

traumatization of the Diaspora along with the dynamics of the conflation of race, class, and gender, and chapter four considered literary depictions of the effects of war. This chapter, however, deals specifically with the direct role of slavery in the development and expansion of capitalism, and the function of so-called Western discourse which is at once revealed as false and ontologically [un]stable.⁷¹ Moreover, it looks at how so-called progress in the black community, via the emergence of the black middle class, only served to further solidify the values of racist capitalism. The second section of the chapter focuses on how Michelle Cliff's contemporary work takes to task Western discourse, the very rhetorical and historical foundation which allowed for the cultural and economic expansion of empire through slavery. These novels make references, in the case of Cliff, to a particular history or narrative of history, or in the case of Jones, directly re-visions and exposes a "true-true"⁷² narrative. This act of exposing a true-true story and the resulting refraction is Neo-anticolonial. The resulting refractions almost always deal with the way that empire, and particularly capitalism has shaped or continues to shape experiences.

5.1 The Legacy of Slavery and an Emerging Black Middle Class

Much of the scholarship on the black middle class has focused on free or enslaved artisans in the antebellum period and the era just after emancipation or on the white-collar working blacks who emerged later. Benjamin P. Bowser's recent work, *The Black Middle Class*, asks "Was there a black middle class in the nineteenth century?" (36). He addresses the emergence and proliferation of a black middle class, and he notes that "the most extensively trained and skilled industrial workers in the country prior to 1830 were slaves" (36). Bowser goes on to argue that the black middle class, as we know it, emerged out of a society of black artisans who were skilled at crafting items necessary for their various communities. Before

Bowser, E. Franklin Frazier also spoke to and arguably laid the foundation for the discussion of the black middle class. His landmark text, *Black Bourgeoisie*, emphasized the problematic aspects of a black middle class, revealing the ways in which the apparent economic liberation of black people was ultimately exclusionary and restrictive. Frazier's numerous respondents,⁷³ including critics who have continued to build on his seminal work, have focused primarily on the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. Many of these scholars de-emphasize the role of black slaveholders in the development of the black middle class. It could be argued that a dearth of information about African Americans who owned slaves could explain the limited discourse. However, as Thomas J. Pressly has shown in his special report for *The Journal of African American History*, Carter G. Woodson's 1924 and 1925 groundbreaking studies⁷⁴ of free African American heads of families who owned slaves, offers a great deal of insight into the leadership role of blacks in the slave economy of the United States. Pressly notes that "*The Known World* is consistent with what we know from the U.S. Census" (82). What is important for this study, however, is not the historical accuracy of Jones's novel but rather what refractions of current U.S. society this fiction offers.

Many, like Sidney Kronus, have located the foundation of the black middle class in the system of slavery, albeit in superficial or fleeting way. Kronus introduces his 1971 study *The Black Middle Class* by noting that, "the black class structure in American society had its roots in the plantation system of the rural South" (2). He further notes that in the place of distinct social and community structures, there emerged a new culture where the body was a commodity, "a laboring human to be bought and sold as economic necessity demanded" (2). While Kronus's approach, naïve to the retentions of African systems of belief, emphasizes what he sees as the complete destruction of "any fabric of African social structure and heritage," it nonetheless

offers something of an argument that had merely been implied and not thoroughly taken up by scholars who preceded him (2). Unfortunately, Kronus's study quickly departs from his discussion of the plantation and moves to offering "analytic types" of black men in the middle class, effectively presenting four economic caricatures of black manhood. Frazier's reference to the black middle class's emergence out of a class of slaveholding blacks is more successful at acknowledging the societal complexities, but he does not delve into the matter as he was primarily concerned with the current state of Black America. Still, he stated that "if one would ferret out the roots of the black bourgeoisie in the United States, one would have to study the varied and sporadic efforts of the Negroes who were free before the Civil War to acquire wealth" (29). Outside of Carter G. Woodson and Abram L. Harris, whose 1936 book *The Negro as Capitalist* which relied heavily on Woodson's work, no detailed study of antebellum slave ownership exists. Just as slave narratives filled the role of history of little-known experiences, the neo-slave narrative—in this case Jones's *The Known World*—serves as a literary record of history. In an interview with *Black Creation*, Toni Morrison discussed the importance of bearing witness.⁷⁵ This process of revealing truths functions to validate the experiences of African Americans through the sharing of untold, and often controversial, narratives. Jones's novel moves us to a credible understanding of the effect of the black slave owning class on the broader African American body.

While little to no evidence exists to support the *degree* to which the slave owning blacks shaped the black middle class versus the emergence of black artisans and craftsmen, the novelization of this historical fact raises important questions about black capital, African American participation as benefactors of empire-building, and the indirect and unintentional buttressing of white supremacist economic values by the hopeful ambitions of a nascent black

middle class. The novel's refraction, lighting the emergence of black power in the nineteenth century, casts an image onto the twenty-first century to reveal a persistent economic divide in Black America that is governed by the rules of racist capitalism.

Of Edward P. Jones's novel *The Known World*, Susan V. Donaldson says: it is "a new kind of historical novel, one that underscores its own provisional status by calling attention to its literary operations—that is, how it goes about representing the past—and that also problematizes history by unearthing discontinuities, anomalies, and multiple possibilities and by posing alternative content and alternative forms" (270). Certainly, Jones's narrative form offers a map of the inhabitants of the fictional Manchester County, Virginia. The text discloses small, yet important, points that draw detailed portraits of the characters. Jones, and *The Known World*, in particular has received much critical attention for these anomalies and alternative stories that unfold in the form of the neo-slave narrative. The novel portrays a society enmeshed in multiple contradictions beginning with Henry Townsend, former slave turned plantation owner and enslaver. Donaldson's argument specifically makes reference to the text's unearthing and fictionalizing of the little-explored fact that Black people in the Antebellum United States enslaved other African Americans. She suggests that Jones' text is questioning recorded history by revealing elements of that account which were erased by the dominant society. In that unearthing, Jones is moving to interrogate all of recorded history while revealing the very atrocities undertaken by the dominant white supremacist society. Still, I contend that there is an additional and overlooked "alternative content" not yet explored by scholars of Jones's work. Yes, *The Known World* questions history, however, the work also presents a nuanced look at the current epoch's veins of oppression that run from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, ultimately connecting them to the contemporary global order evolving in the twenty-first

century. But why does this text, in the form of the neo-slave narrative, initiate a dialogue with the twenty-first-century? What does this neo-slave narrative offer through this peculiar representation of the legacy of white supremacy, specifically how it is internalized by African Americans?

I contend that as Jones's *The Known World* reveals the heinous system of slavery and its destructive effects on black identity and self-concept, it ultimately portrays the emergence of a Black middle class of men and women whose participation in the capitalist system has implications for the widening class gap in a United States. This is later depicted in *All Aunt Hagar's Children*, also the title story of that collection, where a twentieth century black community is plagued by a systemic racism that disempowers African Americans. This fictional indictment of the black middle class in Jones's oeuvre offers a Neo-anticolonial Refraction. This refraction, again, is a specific looking back that produces a particular image forming an implication for the twenty-first century. It is Neo-anticolonial in that it resists and offers a radical critique of contemporary hegemonic structures, particular as they relate to the economy or access to capital. Considering African American literature within the context of a Neo-anticolonial framework has precedent in John Cullen Gruesser's recent study, *Confluences: Postcolonialism, African American Literary Studies, and the Black Atlantic*. Gruesser cautiously puts postcolonial theory in conversation with African American literature and notes that his purpose is "not to blur the distinctions between postcolonial and African American literary studies, but rather to identify points of correspondence and build bridges between them" (2). My research moves in this vein, but calls on a more radical legacy of anti-colonialism stemming from activist writers like Aimé Césaire who argued against, what he described as British and American cultural and economic "barbarism" in empire-building (*Discourse* 67). Neo-anticolonialism, as a way of reading

literature, thus considers the how twenty-first century texts reflect the capitalist heredity of empire, specifically tracing the evolution of capitalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to reveal its twenty-first-century permutations and the current implications of that transformation. Edward P. Jones's fiction depicts this movement and exposes the capitalist drive of the burgeoning black middle class. This refraction, I contend, also speaks to the black middle class's continued participation in the global market at the cost of the continued subjugation of an underclass African American society, as well as a latent and subtle disempowerment of the black middle class itself.

5.2 A Problematic Agency

The Known World tells the story of the black slaveowner Henry Townsend. Henry, whose father is able to purchase his wife's and his own freedom, is left with the plantation owner until his parents are able to buy him out of bondage. Under the tutelage of his white master, William Robbins, the young boy develops a business acumen and sense of the world that causes him to perpetuate the system of slavery and join the budding North American capitalist class after he becomes free. Henry's father, Augustus, stands as one of the African American slave owners of whom Frazier speaks when he notes that "in many cases the Negro owners of slaves had bought a wife or husband, a brother or sister, or children, who were slaves and who thus became legally slaves of the Negro who bought them" (*Black Bourgeoisie* 31-32). The story of Augustus offers a refraction of this phenomenon, as the freed man is later stolen, sold into slavery, and dies in slavery. His journey South is peppered with stories of his working to buy his freedom—the system of slavery which upheld by his son as slave master—reclaimed him and his life (277-281). The Neo-anticolonial refraction reveals that efforts by the African American to

gain true power and freedom will never amount to real success until the very system is upturned and obliterated.

The novel also reveals that this is true for Henry who is depicted as completely invested in the slave market. Frazier insists that “although it is impossible to say what portion of the Negro owners of slaves bought them for philanthropic motives, those free Negroes who owned plantations or maintained large estates in Charleston and New Orleans owned slaves for the same reason as the white slaveholders” (32). Jones’s fictional slave owner, Henry Townsend clearly fits into the latter group. While still in bondage, Henry became his master’s groom and made every effort to ingratiate himself to William Robbins. The narrator tells us, “Henry would, in those early days when he was trying to prove himself to Robbins, stand in front of the mansion and watch as Robbins and Sir Guilderham emerged from the winter fog of the road, the boy’s heart beating faster and faster as the man and the horse became larger and larger” (*The Known World* 20). At a young age Henry was able to recognize power and lay his allegiances at the center of that authority. Consequently, Henry bought his first slave, the overseer Moses, from William Robbins. This transaction solidifies Henry as an enslaver and begins his transition to black middle class. His acquisition of land, home, additional slaves, and a wife followed the mold of a southern planter. As Frazier points out:

The free Negroes constituted, in fact, the element in the Negro population that had made the greatest progress in acquiring European culture. The pattern of family life of the well-to-do free Negroes in the plantation South was the same as the patriarchal family pattern of the slave-holding whites. Moreover, their outlook on life and their values were the same as the white models. (14-15)

Even though Henry is depicted as somewhat contemplative about his role as enslaver, the novel reveals that he is ultimately incapable of truly seeing the heinousness of his situation. This is a key difference between Henry and his father Augustus—this inability to see the suffering of his own people. There exists a schism between the father and son that is emphasized and at times mediated by Henry’s mother Mildred. Henry’s relationship with women would seem to be the location of the little awareness he has. In view of that, it is remarkable that we are told “the strange thing was that it would be the second black person Henry Townsend bought—not the first, not Moses who became his overseer—who would trouble him after the purchase (49-50). It is unclear whether the fact troubling Henry was his purchasing a cook, a woman named Zeddie who was likely his mother’s age, or that “Henry didn’t feel Zeddie was worth the money Robbins paid for her” (50). However, it is clear that Henry attempts to negotiate, even superficially, the system of enslavement. Later on we learn that “Henry had always said that he wanted to be a better master than any white man he had ever known. He did not understand that the kind of world he wanted to create was doomed before he had even spoken the first syllable of the word *master*” (64). At this particular moment in the text the narrator’s judgment of Henry’s ambitions offers a refraction that addresses the psyche of the black planter and enslaver. More importantly, it suggests that the mode by which Henry aims to achieve power—via his footing in the plantocracy⁷⁶—would not only have limitations for him, it would also be detrimental for the black people enslaved under his power. Unlike his father Augustus and many of the enslaved on Robbins’s plantation, Henry failed to see the crime of enslavement because he was conditioned in the way of William Robbins and the society of Virginia planters. The novel tells us that “when Henry went into freedom, Robbins had the boy come back again and again to make boots and shoes for him and his male guests” (112). It was in this way that:

Henry began to accumulate money, which, along with some real estate he would eventually get from Robbins, would be the foundation of what he was and what he had the evening he died. It was Robbins who taught him the value of money, the value of his labors, and never to blink when he gave a price for his product. Many times he traveled with Robbins as the white man worked to create what he had once hoped to be an empire. (113)

Henry's distance from Augustus is further exacerbated by William Robbins's continued mentorship. The young man is not even able to discern his father's inquiry about the emancipation when Augustus finally purchases Henry from Robbins and asks his son, "you feelin any different?" (49). Henry remains unchanged because his years in bondage were spent under the guidance of Robbins and in the machine of capitalism. Augustus's son is incapable of viewing himself outside of the economic contraption, and he moves to firmly secure himself to the system. We later learn that "Robbins had told him to trust the Manchester National Bank and Henry would put part of what he earned there" (114). Frazier argues, in *Black Bourgeoisie*, that "...it was mainly in the field of banking that the new spirit of business enterprise manifested itself" (29). Thus Jones's narrative traces Henry's development, and his allegiance to the ways of his former master William Robbins is juxtaposed with his separation from his parents and the values of their society. The consummating of this dynamic, quoted at length below, is telling:

When Henry, at twenty, bought his first piece of land from Robbins, he told his parents right off. The land was miles from where they lived but a short ride from Robbins's plantation, though it was not connected. By the time he died he would own all the

land between him and Robbins so that there was nothing separating what they owned. He had supper with Mildred and Augustus the day of the land sale. But the day he bought from Robbins his first slave, Moses, he did not go to their house and he did not go to them for a long time. He spent that first day of ownership with Robbins, and Moses and he and the white man planned where he would build his house. (122)

Henry is firmly situated as an enslaver with ambitions to build his own empire, and when he does return to his parents' home and informs them of his purchase, the interaction reveals that Henry's motives and ethics are governed by the fact that he believes he "ain't done nothing that any white man wouldn't do" (138). The young man sees his efforts to enslave and build his wealth not as a crime against humanity but as his right as a free man with capital, and thus his quest for power is marked by an effort to emulate whiteness. Frazier also notes this when he writes that "the single factor that has dominated the mental outlook of the black bourgeoisie has been its obsession with the struggle for status" (236). Henry's claiming of this status comes in a number of ways, including the direct subjugation of his slave Moses. Under the direction of Robbins, Henry comes to understand that despite their shared age group and race, Moses and Henry are not equal because of the assumed power difference. Robbins's chiding of Henry for wrestling with Moses in the dirt immediately changes the outlook of the young enslaver. Robbins warned him:

...the law expects you to know what is master and what is slave.
 And it does not matter if you are not much more darker than your
 slave. The law is blind to that. You are the master and that is all the

law wants to know. The law will come to you and stand behind you. But if you roll around and be a playmate to your property, and your property turns around and bites you, the law will come to you still, but it will not come with the full hear and all the deliberate speed that you will need. You will have failed your part of the bargain. (123)

Shortly after, Henry Slaps Moses several times and calls him a nigger, effectively drawing a clear line between master and slave, man and property. Henry continues to set himself apart as a man of material worth and no longer sees himself as a member of the black community of Manchester County. His access to capital gains him entry into a type of financial whiteness.⁷⁷ Much in the same way, members of the black middle class of the United States disavow a particular notion of blackness as they attempt to acquire wealth and status. Moses's proximity to Henry, and his role as an overseer, allows him to experience and see the power of a slave master. His attempts to become the man of the house after Henry's death, exemplify Frazier's position regarding the desire for status, and Moses's efforts are arguably a direct result of his witnessing the power of a black slave owner. He begins to go to the house nightly to give Caldonia reports of the plantation and its inhabitants. When Henry's widow requests that Moses tell her stories about her husband, Moses passes on embellished narratives of Henry's greatness, and Caldonia requires him to share the tales again and again in her parlour. After several evenings of having sex with Caldonia, Moses begins to ask if he was indeed "on his way to being freed and then marrying a free woman...on his way to becoming Mr. Townsend?" (293). With those aspirations in mind, he tells Alice, the enslaved woman who wanders nightly, that he has the power to free

her, and he asks her to take his wife and son along. Like Henry, Moses undergoes a type of education under his master. According to Frazier,

“living in close association with whites, the house servants were subject to a type of discipline which caused them to identify themselves with their masters. This discipline included both moral and religious instruction” (12). In the case of Henry, however, it was instruction on financial rather than religious matters, and for Moses, it was an indirect instruction about power. When his desire for freedom is not immediately granted by the widow of the plantation owner, Moses sees his opportunity for status and authority disappearing. This exchange offers a Neo-anticolonial Refraction in which the black middle class effectively thwarts the potential for uplifting the underclass African American community. Thus Moses is relegated to the margins of influence, and later on, before he leaves the Townsend plantation, he reflects on his distance from the center of power. He remembers Henry saying, “You be the boss of this place. There’s my word, then my wife’s word, and then there’s your word” (332). Moses also recalls Henry telling him that he was listed in the “big book” as “Overseer Moses Townsend,” and his contemplation leads him to wonder about his own humanity—his status as the property of another person. Moses even thinks of himself as “Marse Moses” in an attempt to envision himself in the position of power (333). His thoughts manifest as a kind of lamentation and the overseer eventually leaves the plantation, unknowingly headed south. This refraction casts an image of an underclass black society whose efforts to advance are in opposition to a black middle class that functions within the framework of white supremacy. The ultimate failure of the underclass is refracted in the figure of Moses who leaves the plantation and his role as overseer, moving with little direction and little hope for a better future.

Jones's novel portrays several layers and degrees of power in Manchester County. From Henry's house with his wife Caldonia, to the plantation and slave settlement, and out in the county among free blacks and white, there is a negotiation of power that occurs on a micro and macro level. That Caldonia's actions produce the failure of Moses's attempt to gain power, speaks to the unique and rarely explored role of the free black woman in the antebellum South. The experiences of women in *The Known World* offer intriguing and even more problematic models of agency than that of Henry Townsend the black slave owner. Starting with Henry's wife, Caldonia, Jones's text presents the shifting reality of moneyed free black women in the antebellum United States and it forms refractions that offer a great deal of visual acuity about the current state of middle class African American women.

5.3 Un-true Womanhood and the Power of Capital

The Known World aptly opens on the day that Henry dies, and his departure introduces the black women of Manchester County, Virginia beginning with Henry's widow, Caldonia Townsend, who, we are told, was "a coloured woman born free and who had been educated all her days" (5). In his 1936 book, *The Negro as Capitalist*, Abram L. Harris remarked on the educated and free blacks of the nineteenth century, noting that "their contact was with the benevolent members of the white upper class and they sought to emulate the social values and ideals of the members of that class" (3). It is also arguable that free black women of wealth also attempted to imitate their white counterparts. Caldonia, as the wife and ultimately the widow of a plantation owner, demonstrates, to a great extent, the characteristics associated with white women of that class. She is relegated to the home and is initially depicted within the realm of the cult of domesticity.⁷⁸ However, Jones's depiction of Caldonia, her mother Maude, and other free black women in Manchester County suggests that these women lived within a revised structure

of womanhood. While their race precluded their acceptance into the realm of nineteenth-century womanhood, their privilege allowed them to attempt to claim some of the characteristics. Hence, these moneyed women of color would mimic the lives of white women who were wives of plantation owners. In this way the women take on a non-physiological whiteness—a whiteness shaped by access to capital. Katherine Clay Bassard argues that the free black characters “cross a social line of demarcation that nonetheless amounts to a metaphoric passing” (408). This type of class-passing afforded middle class black woman the authority to participate as decision-makers in the plantation culture of the antebellum south (Bassard 408).

E. Franklin Frazier’s landmark 1957 book, *Black Bourgeoisie*, speaks to the efforts of free blacks and mulattoes to emulate their white enslavers in religion, education, manners, etcetera, in order to gain “white” status. Unlike his counterparts in the academy, such as Sidney Kronus who wrote about the black middle class with a problematic paternalistic and at times racist lens, Frazier offered a scathing critique of that group of African Americans whom, he claimed, suffered from a nothingness in the middle class that voided the “content and significance” from their lives (238). In the cases of the free black women in *The Known World*, the suffering engendered comes not from a voided “content and significance” but rather from a new importance shaped by freedom and access to capital. Scholarship coming after Frazier raises additional questions about the evolution of the black middle class and the efforts to halt the pandering to white society and culture. All of these observations are useful for understanding the worlds of Jones’s texts and the alternative content therein. As Katherine Clay Bassard notes: “That there are both male and female black slaveowners in this text troubles our usual ways of discussing issues of race, gender and slavery as a clearly delineated set of power relation” (407). Through this unusual depiction of power, and even as Jones exposes the heinous white

supremacist regime and the crimes of enslavement, he presents a burgeoning black middle class—particularly of women—many of whom stand on the backs of enslaved African Americans. When asked about his frequent and moving portrayals of women, Jones said, “When you are raised by a woman who had it hard and you are sensitive to how hard a life she had, you don't necessarily look around and think of women as fragile creatures, slave or otherwise. You develop the belief that they can ‘make a way out of no way’ ”.⁷⁹ And some of his female characters do make a way out of no way; *The Known World's* Alice and Priscilla escape to the north with much success and Alice's artwork is patronized by many. Others, however, such as Henry's widow Caldonia and even Fern Elston, too, participate in, and benefit from, the system of enslavement. Again, these African American women's experiences emerge as a distinctive story of middle class black society and present as new and unique narratives that, at once, move against the dominant narrative to depict empowered black women even as it shows how this power was, in part, driven by capitalist white supremacist systems. Jones's novel repeatedly refracts images that force a look at the legacy of raced-capitalism and its current permutation in the twenty-first century. This point calls for pause and consideration of Bassard's warning against “the tendency to focus too heavily on the ‘historical’ accuracy or authentication of African American literature as autobiography, sociology, and lived experience and an under-appreciation for the genius of the black imaginary” (410). Certainly, Jones has produced several texts of literary brilliance. We see his imagination unfolding in beautiful prose and multi-dimensional characters. But his imagination also weaves a narrative which pulls a thread through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and into this era—one rife with the legacy and project of dehumanization and disenfranchisement that so shaped early American society.

Jones's development of Caldonia and Fern is but one testament of the genius of his imagination. Not only does Jones create an intricate community around the black slave owner Henry Townsend, he also re-shapes, what is arguably, the most subjugated group in the antebellum era and shows how she—the black woman in freedom—can unfortunately function as a tool of a U.S. economic and cultural hegemony. It seems appropriate that the free women are together at Henry's passing. His death signals a transfer of power to, and a narrative focus on, the free women. We are told that Fern and her husband owned twelve slaves and she also served as a paid teacher of free black children. Like Henry and Caldonia, she is clearly depicted as being invested in the exclusionary and oppressive system, and when Henry dies she says to Caldonia, reflecting on her role as Henry's teacher: "I always thought you did right marrying him" (7). Fern's affection for Henry began when he was a young slave owner, sent to her by William Robbins to be educated along with the free black children. Fern is said to have reported that "Henry had been the brightest of her students, someone she would have taught for free" (7). The memory and values of the black slave owner, Henry Townsend, are continuously invoked by the free women of Manchester County, and the moments before his death, and his passing itself, signals the confirmation of their power. This legacy, and its significance to the emergence of the black middle class, is portrayed in refraction early in the text:

That last day, the day Henry Townsend died, Fern Elston returned early in a buggy driven by a sixty-five-year-old slave her husband had inherited from his father...Fern and Caldonia spent a few hours in the parlor, drinking a milk-and-honey brew Caldonia's mother was fond of making...There were not that many free educated women in Manchester County to pass her time with and

so Fern had made a friend of a woman, who, as a girl, had found too much to giggle about in the words of William Shakespeare.

(10)

Fern is transported to the vast Townsend plantation by an old slave who came to her via inheritance. This moment in the text, just before Henry's death, results in Caldonia's shift to power and presents the image of a burgeoning black middle class arriving at the seat of power through the demoralization of a black underclass that is enslaved and exploited. At the moment of Henry's passing Fern and Caldonia are engaged in a conversation about a white widow who was kept prisoner by her two slaves and made to do hard labor for such a long time that upon being freed "she did not remember that she was supposed to be the owner, and it was a long time before she could be taught that again" (11). The women's observations at the time of Henry's death present a refraction, not only on the foundation of the black middle class, but also on the persistence of the trauma of bondage in shaping one's concept and understanding of self. Just as the white widow was unable to see herself as master after being under the bridle of labor, so does the underclass black society remain incapable of emerging into a mental liberation, particularly as their lives are juxtaposed with the freedom and privilege of a black over/middle class.

By the end of the novel power moves to the women's hands and the farm is referred to as "Caldonia's plantation," and the widow does in fact assume the role of enslaver (324). Not only does Caldonia insure her human property, she also perceives herself within a differentiated race and class framework. After having sex with Moses, her dead husband's black overseer, Caldonia wondered, "Was this a kind of miscegenation?" (292). Even though they are of the same race, Caldonia perceives a clear difference between herself and Moses as she recalls the recent whipping of a white woman who had relations with a slave. Refusing her twin brother's pleas to

abandon slave-holding and move to the north, Caldonia re-affirms her position on the plantation and among the community of slave-owners in Manchester County. Thus she stands as an example of the black middle class that was born on the plantation of the American South which took its values from white masters and enslavers. Frazier notes that the “social psychology of the middle-class African American often revolved around an identity crisis,” arguably an urge toward whiteness (11). We see this negotiation of self-concept unfold with Caldonia’s contemplation of her own identity in relation to Moses—whom she concretely sees as property despite her affection for him. Caldonia says: “I love Moses. I love Moses with his one name” (292). Moses’s place as an enslaved person, as well as his status, is cemented in that reference to his single name. He would not be offered the name of his master or mistress. Even though she affirms her feelings for Moses, Caldonia still regards him as distinctly different from her and again thinks of herself in relation to the white woman who was whipped for having sex with a slave. The inverse sexual power dynamic between Caldonia and Moses complicates the conversation about an emergent black middle class.

Jones’s novel emphasizes the significance of generational heritage, and particularly in the case of Caldonia, whose mother serves as a model for the young widow, we see a replication of the power of the free black woman. The text reveals that Maude’s anxiety about what her daughter Caldonia will do with the plantation and its enslaved population stems from her keen understanding that there is very little distance between free black and enslaved. The narrative tells us that “her own family had been free for generations but they had never had enough to buy even one slave” (184). Despite this awareness (or, possibly, as a result of it), Maude insists on cementing her daughter’s status. She entreats Caldonia to think of her legacy, and we are told that, “For Maude, the legacy meant slaves and land, the foundation of wealth. Her fear was that

Caldonia, in grief, would consider selling the slaves, along with the land, as if to accomplish some wish Henry, tied to the want and need of a material world, had been too afraid to try to fulfill in life” (180). Maude’s reaction to her daughter’s grief replicates the urgency she felt when her husband, who bought himself from bondage, wanted to free his slaves as a form of penance for not buying his family out of bondage. We learn that Maude poisoned her husband to prevent him from freeing his slaves. Maude’s efforts to maintain her status as a free black woman of money began with thwarting her husband’s purchase of his family. The novel tells us that Maude told her husband, Tilmon Newman, “your parents and brothers will wait until we are good and set on our feet, until we have enough of everything so they can come into freedom and not want for anything” (183). Much in the same way the contemporary black middle class aspires for a power and wealth that would prevent them from falling into the abjection of poverty, so did the antebellum black bourgeoisie seek a status that would keep them from bondage and suffering. Accordingly, figures like Maude adopt the characteristics typical of white owners. We are told that like white mistresses in the South, Maude “felt God had pitted the world against [her] and no one could be more against [her] than property that could hear and speak and think. [She] would never make the mistake of believing a slave was no more than a cup or saucer” (182). Although Caldonia’s sentiments depart from her mother’s in many ways, she none-the-less asserts her intentions to uphold Henry’s legacy, and she mirrors her mother in the ways that she views herself and her property. We learn that Maude took a lover, a man named Clarke who was enslaved on her plantation. Like Caldonia, Maude also thinks of herself in terms of white womanhood, saying to Clarke after they had sex, “Do you know...if I was a white woman, they would come in here and tear you from limb to limb?” (246). When he asks her what they would do since she is not white, Maude responds saying “I suspect that since I own you, since I have

the papers on you, they might do the same thing if I up and screamed. They wouldn't be as fast, I suppose, but they would come" (246). Maude at once reaffirms Clarke's position as slave even as she situates herself within a realm of whiteness—in economic terms. Her access to papers—the documents which are evidence of her capital—position her as powerful and set her degrees away from enslaved women and free blacks without property. This disjunction between the concepts and expectations of black womanhood and the lived experience of black women of property manifests in several ways. More importantly, these instances offer refractions that complicate the notions of antebellum black womanhood in the ways that they illustrate contemporary notions of black womanhood. In the figures of Maude and Caldonia, we see the concept of self hedge on an idea of womanhood directly shaped by whiteness; yet we also see the negotiating of the racial line via access to wealth. We are told that:

The morning after Caldonia Townsend made love to Moses her overseer for the first time, she woke up about dawn and sat up in her bed...She had had a dream just before waking of being in a house smaller than her own, a house she had to share with a thousand others...nothing came to her except the memory of someone in the dream saying that people in the attic were burning other people. (284)

It is arguable that her dream is linked to her intercourse with Moses. The novel often focuses on Moses's proximity to Caldonia and his ability to touch or reach her in different ways. After their first sexual encounter it is as if Caldonia is touched by the state of bondage in a way that being a master would not allow for. Still, she is incapable of seeing herself within this realm. While the dream reveals her connection to the "thousand others" in a small house where the

people at the top were burning others, Caldonia finds it peculiar and is incapable of seeing herself among those people suffering from a racial and financial hierarchy. Further separating herself from the enslaved, Caldonia finds it difficult to believe that a slave would have the desire to leave the Townsend Plantation. Regarding the escape of Moses's wife, child, and Alice, Caldonia "[found] it difficult to believe that two women and a boy would leave what she and Henry had made. A man perhaps...not a madwoman and a woman who seemed to adore her" (317). Caldonia remains bound in the nineteenth-century notions of womanhood, albeit more nuanced. Bassard's note that "the most disturbing aspect of Caldonia's character is the way in which she uses her power as slaveholder for the purposes of sexual exploitation of a black male slave" highlights Caldonia's complicated position as enslaver and woman (413). Caldonia further complicates her position even as she perpetuates the exclusiveness of the black middle class by agreeing to marry Louis, the biological son of William Robbins and his slave Philomena. Her decision to do so in spite of her relations with Moses the overseer, tenders a refraction that suggests she is bound to remain in the realm of slave ownership. Furthermore, when she says to Louis "we are all worthy of one another" it is clear that there is a distinct circle of inclusion, and only the free black property owners fit into this mold (24).

Fern Elston, however, who is also a part of that peer group, is more perceptive, and her experience offers an additional look at the complexities of the raced and gendered class dynamic in the antebellum period and beyond. We are told that Fern was a free black woman who, while she chose not to, could pass for white. She was the school teacher for free black children in Manchester County, and she had taught Henry who was then her first and only dark-skinned, former slave, adult student. It's probable that Fern's work with Henry shaped her views on enslavement, but the novel does not offer the possibility for any clear conclusions about Fern.

She exists as somewhat of a paradox and her thoughts and actions reveal that Fern, even if subconsciously, grapples with the issues of race, power, and money that shape her current life. While she functions according to black middle class rules about race and marriage, she, none-the-less confronts and moves against other societal norms. The novel tells us that “In four generations, Fern’s family had managed to produce people who could easily pass for white. “Marry nothing beneath you,” her mother always said, meaning no one darker than herself, and Fern had not” (74). Fern negotiates a racial boundary with her ability to pass for white, and even though we are told that she chose to identify as black, we consistently see her white skin as a means to privilege. When Fern decides to purchase the slave Jebediah Dickinson (a transaction which occurs because the seller believed her to be white), she initially has intentions of freeing him from bondage. However, Jebediah’s brazen insolence and sexual references injures her pride and she decides to teach him a lesson. The novel tells us “Fern never liked to flog slaves; for every whip mark on one slave’s back, she estimated that his value came down \$5. But there were some unforgivable matters in the world” (259). It is likely that what is unforgivable is the enslaved man’s crude remark to a woman of status, but it is equally likely that her near-whiteness also makes his comment offensive. What is even more important about this image of Fern is that she reflects on the value of her property when she considers flogging. Even her ability to negotiate a deal with Jebediah’s owner, as well as her access to banks and the law are markers of the hierarchy of identity driven by property ownership and access to capital. Fern’s interaction with Jebediah, a highly literate and resistant enslaved man, forces her to ponder her position and the enslavement of others. Here we see the ways in which the black middle class is incapable of escaping the effects of enslavement. Fern says of Jebediah Dickinson, “With him there...I feel as if I belong to him, that I am his property” (286). Her discomfort comes from not

only being subject to Jebediah's daily pestering, but it also stems from her seeing that Jebediah was her intellectual equal. The others in Fern's presence are incapable of seeing this reality and we are told that:

The young people laughed to hear her say something so extraordinary. They were all members of a free Negro class that, while not having the power of some whites, had been brought up to believe that they were rulers waiting in the wings. They were much better than the majority of white people, and it was only a matter of time before those white people came to realize that. (287)

Unlike Fern who is at times unsettled by the realities of the system of slavery, the young people lack an understanding of the fact that their status as free black participants in the capitalist society is buttressed by slave labor.⁸⁰ Still, in Fern's regard for slavery, her thoughts show that she sees herself as completely distinct from those of the race who are enslaved. She says "I realized all over again that if I were in bondage I would slash my master's throat on the first day. I wonder why they all have not risen up and done that" (288). Fern's position is a complex one and she functions beyond any binary of black/white, good/bad, poor/rich. However, her interactions with the party of free blacks mark a moment in which the black middle class separates itself from other African Americans and rests on the privilege of capital. Jones's novels offer Neo-anticolonial Refractions that help us to see the thread of capitalism in the subjugation of African Americans, and, more importantly, the refractions reveal how the efforts of the black middle class serve to buttress white supremacist systems. In fact, Jones's novel and his most recent collection of stories give us a picture of this evolution of power, and continues to portray the shifting ideology and status in the African Americans initially depicted with Henry and

Augustus and the land owning black women of Manchester County. Bassard notes that “in marking the transition between Augustus and Henry, Jones is saying something important, as well, about a generation of African Americans who participated in the capitalist project for well-intended purposes, only to have the next generation who were beneficiaries of that participation miss the irony or ambivalence of those gestures” (418). I contend that through such considerations of familial legacy, Jones’s novel connects to his shorter fiction and, in so doing, offers additional refractions that show the reality of later generations of African Americans who participate in the U.S. capitalist project which thrived in the antebellum era. His collection *All Aunt Hagar’s Children* is a critically acclaimed compilation of stories directly connected to Jones’s first book of short fiction *Lost in the City*. The author marks his literary and narrative continuity as an important feature with these two texts; however, I argue that *The Known World* is crucial to understanding the two collections of short stories.

5.4 ‘Up out of the South’: No Land Promised/No Promised Land

Jones’s fiction, and particularly *All Aunt Hagar’s Children*, offers Neo-anticolonial Refractions that move against the contemporary “boot-strap” rhetoric espoused by a black middle class that attempts to mollify the system of racist capitalism. Jones’s literary refraction of the so-called progressive nature of U.S. society is depicted in the title story “All Aunt Hagar’s Children.” It is important to note that Jones’s use of the biblical figure Hagar,⁸¹ while not unique to African American literature and music,⁸² functions in distinct ways. The name Hagar pays homage to black women’s life in bondage, away from the homeland and toiling as slaves, and it also rejects the Judeo-Christianizing and singular alignment of enslaved Africans and their descendants with Israelites.⁸³ Jones’s Hagar and her progeny negotiate the denial of Abraham’s blessing. Furthermore, the title “Aunt” associates Hagar with the plantation of the antebellum

American South. When conflated, these concepts of Hagar present enslaved women who are forced to bear the offspring of the master, endure the wrath of the mistress, and ultimately experience the trauma of family life on the Southern plantation. All Aunt Hagar's children thus refers to the generations that followed those who lived in bondage. This reference in itself offers a refraction that guides the reader to a better understanding of the status of contemporary African Americans; however, Jones's work explores the role of African Americans as both victims and agents of exploitation. The book's dedication, to Jones's sister and mother, reads: "to the multitudes who came up out of the South for something better, something different, and, again, to the memory of my mother...who came as well and found far less than even the little she dared hope for." Beginning with this epigraph, Jones acknowledges the host of people who sought a promised land in the United States North, many of whom found no such place. Even the black middle class who fares better than the underclass of newly-freed persons are limited within the racist capitalist system. *All Aunt Hagar's Children* portrays a mid-twentieth-century America whose black middle class has no true mobility, and more significantly, experiences a scattering and loss of the generations following. Frazier speaks to this in *Black Bourgeoisie* when he says of the black middle class:

Its power within the Negro community stems from the fact that middle-class Negroes hold strategic positions in segregated institutions and create and propagate the ideologies current in the Negro community. In the political life of the American society the Negro political leaders, who have always had a middle-class outlook, follow an opportunistic policy. They attempt to accommodate the demands of Negroes for better economic and

social conditions to their personal interests which are tied up with the political machines, which in turn are geared to the interests of the white propertied classes. (86)

Thus, both the power and limitations of the black middle class are directed and shaped by the interests of white supremacist capitalists. Jones's collection of stories offers numerous examples which elucidate this point. The opening and closing stories "In the Blink of God's Eye" and "Tapestry," respectively, portray an initial exodus from the South, and they illustrate the possibilities, both positive and negative, that await migrating African Americans. The title story "All Aunt Hagar's Children" and "Adam Robinson Acquires Grandparents and a Little Sister" explore the legacy of Hagar through its focus on black parents and their children who are unable to fulfill the dream and hopes of a better future. Jones is praised for his attention to the details in his crafting of stories set mainly in Washington, D.C., and it has been said that this native of the District "seems to have access to an endless archive of stories from his native Washington, DC, drawing primarily from those areas far beyond the pale of power, privilege, and prestige" (Graham 596). Jones's focus on Washington, D.C. can even be viewed as a Neo-anticolonial Refraction as it presents the severe paradox of human strife juxtaposed with the center of national and ultimately global power. The stories of descendants of slaves and children of free blacks aspiring for a better life but ultimately sharing similar fates supports Frazier's and Abram's arguments that the black middle class would ultimately be relegated to a life of prosperity adjudicated by the interest of a white over-class.

5.5 Aunt Hagar and Ishmaelite America

Jones's opening story "In the Blink of God's Eye" introduces us to a young couple, Ruth and Aubrey, who leave their Virginia home "where all was safe and all was family" to make a

new life in Washington, D.C. where “there came to the wife like a scent carried on the wind some word that wolves roamed the streets and roads of the city after sundown” (1). New to Washington, D.C., the couple, like many others in the stories that open and close the collection, are depicted as people in a kind of wilderness much like a pregnant Hagar on her initial escape from Sarah’s wrath.⁸⁴ Although the Southern Christian rhetoric⁸⁵ would align a promise of freedom with the exodus from Egypt, Jones’s references to Hagar suggest that Egypt would have been a place of refuge for the woman enslaved by Sarah, Abraham’s wife. Disrupting the widely-accepted paradigm that compared enslaved African Americans to Israelites, Washington, D.C. initially presents as a kind of positive Egypt—the Egypt of Hagar where she would have found refuge from her oppressor. Yet Jones does not marry this notion, his stories relay numerous complexities where the Promised Land is at once Canaan and Egypt, where the South is at once home and site of bondage, where Washington, D.C. presents as a land of hope and a place of exile. The story begins by depicting a place settled by strangers. We are told that the neighborhood was quiet as it was composed of “city houses populated mostly by country people used to going to bed with the chickens” (1). Here we see the main characters immersed in a foreign place, but more importantly this opening story introduces a motif that persists in the collection: the unrooted and lost offspring or child. Maryemma Graham, in her review of *All Aunt Hagar’s Children*, says that “Jones explores with lyrical insight the limited lives of black men and women and their children. They are the uncommonly common folk, who barely eke out an existence, facing adversity after adversity, but who name their own freedom as they turn around disappointed lives in the most unsuspecting ways” (596). These family circumstances, and particularly the repeated trauma and tragedy in the lives of the children—Hagar’s progeny— affect “common folk” and middle class black folk alike. The appearance of an infant, still

attached to its umbilical cord, hanging in a tree outside Ruth and Aubrey's home is the first instance of the precariousness of young African American life. The collection refracts a picture of Black America which reveals that the efforts of a black middle class only serves to reify the effects of white supremacy, in effect decreasing the black middle class and solidifying the power of the white supremacist hegemony. In this way, the youthfulness of a newly-freed Black America is worn down under white patriarchy and exclusionary and exploitative economics. The Virginian characters initially tell Ruth that "her marriage and Washington had been good for her," but after hearing about the baby, they also said "what could anyone expect of a city with a president who was so mean to colored people" (15). But this life in Washington would initially seem prosperous for Ruth's husband Aubrey. The couple lived with and worked for his aunt Joan, who ran a rooming house for black people, among other businesses. Aubrey's aunt and father stand as two examples of the desire for black people to gain power and wealth. In Aubrey's father, however, we see the futile efforts among the black society to improve financial worth as he "took the family to Kansas where some of the father's people were prospecting" (3). Aubrey's dad returns to Virginia penniless and in debt, and his is a legacy borne by many African Americans. In much the same way, Aubrey's departure from the South ushers in a new era, albeit one colored by some of the same limitations of the old. This unchanging America, despite a departure from the South, is also signaled by the passing of the generation of enslaved persons like "Mrs. Halley Stafford, who...decided she had had enough and died in the bed she was conceived and born in" (5). Yet Mrs. Stafford's life, beginning and ending in the same place, even as her surroundings and life had arguably changed and improved since emancipation, seems to indicate a unique stasis in the lives of African Americans. Even as scores of people leave the

South for employment opportunities they are greeted by a Northern reality that presents its own sets of challenges for the intra-national black diaspora.

In the story “Tapestry” a young southerner on his way to Chicago is told that “they treat colored people like kings and queens in Washington, cause that’s where the president lives. Would they treat colored people anything but good in a city where the president hangs his hat and pets his dog and snores beside Mrs. President every night?” (379). Jones troubles the accepted notions to reveal the deeper complexities of African American life, and his narratives cast refractions that shine a light on the plight of blacks in America. Furthermore, his stories testify to the brutal disconnect from history and identity that occurs with exile. Aunt Hagar’s children, in effect, lose a connection with their roots when they leave the South in the ways Toni Morrison discusses in “City Limits, Village Values: Concepts of the Neighborhood in Black Fiction.” The young northerner George Carter, who is courting Anne Perry of Mississippi, is portrayed as being so tied to the city that he is unaware or even incapable of functioning in Southern farm life until he joins Anne, ultimately his wife, and her family in working the land. George and his quest for a prosperous life is apposed with Anne’s crafting of tapestries—a way that she envisions her space and history. Her marriage and departure from Mississippi marks a moment in which she is cut off from the generations before her and from her craft as she leaves an unfinished tapestry behind. The story tells us that “none of her descendants were ever to become tapestry women” (389). The short piece refracts a phenomenon that plagues black America, that is the traumatic disconnection from a community and family that shapes and defines one’s life and outlook. As Anne travels to Washington, D.C. via train, the other people in the car initially appear familiar and “she became as at home with them as the people around [her home] Picayune” (391). However, as the train pushes on into the North overnight, the sleeping people

around her become a frightful bunch talking in their sleep and revealing the horrors of a Southern slave life that come along as their baggage. “Tapestry” often refers to generations passed and generations to come, and the story shows these people on the move via train to all parts of the Northern United States. Like God’s promise to Hagar⁸⁶ the generations of African Americans are expanded, but they are ultimately prevented from claiming their birthright. Thus, African Americans, like Ishmael and his offspring are forever excluded from the blessings of Abraham.

5.6 Striving for Abraham’s Blessing (In a Shopping Bag)

The repeated references to the city of the presidents of the United States and Washington, D.C. as a kind of Promised Land to the offspring of Hagar and Abraham, unearths Jones’s provoking of one legacy of the United States. First, we have African Americans who are, in many instances, the descendants of enslaved women and the proverbial white builders of economic power in the United States, and secondly we have an act and promise of freedom through the pen of Abraham Lincoln, the president of black emancipation. This Abrahamic⁸⁷ legacy is the paradox that continues to govern the lives of blacks in Washington, D.C., and the larger national arena. Jones’s collection explores the numerous complexities of this bequest and offers refractions, through true-true narratives, that reveal the continued and persistent subjugation of black life in the United States. This decimation of African American life, again, is presented via the motif of the broken family and traumatized offspring. Much like Ishmael’s near-death suffering in the desert, we see a black childhood under distress in Jones’s short story collection.

In “Adam Robinson Acquires Grandparents and a Little Sister,” Jones exposes the contradiction of a middle-class black family whose money is incapable of saving their children from the evils of American society. We are introduced to Noah Robinson and his wife Maggie,

who live in the nation's capital. The story opens with Noah's lamenting D.C.'s dying and disappearing trees as he reflects on his childhood and his parents' arrival to the city from South Carolina. Throughout the story there is a pining for the past coupled with a hope for the future in the midst of multiple tragedies. The narrative tells us that "so many descendants of slaves had done well in Washington, for themselves and for the flesh of their flesh, but his own son had failed as a father, the first to do so in a long, long line of good and righteous fathers" (242). Noah and Maggie had done well. In retirement they had been able to travel to Africa and had plans to visit other continents, but the revelation that their grandchildren were living in foster and government care shifted their plans and returned them to parenthood. This story, like others in the collection, focuses on the dynamics and limitations of black manhood. We learn that Noah's wife "had a Ph.D." and "his three daughters had four Ph.D.s and an M.D. among them" but "he and Caleb had only high-school diplomas" (254). While Maggie's family had deep roots in the black middle class of D.C., Noah came from a southern Black class of folks looking for a better life. The inability for Noah and his male progeny to escape the system that further dehumanized black men is depicted in the lives of the grandchildren: Elsa, the toddler granddaughter easily transitions to life with her grandparents while her estranged brother Adam, who was lost in the child welfare system, struggles with making a home in his grandparents' apartment. Like the bonsai tree that Noah cares for, his offspring are marked by the "training" that was endured in slavery. Noah reflected on the life of the tree and its training, noting that there were "bonsai trees that had been living—"trained"—for three hundred, four hundred, five hundred years" (260). Noah's preoccupation with the trees in Washington, D.C. and his care for the little bonsai reveal an inability to break free from the mold set by the hegemonic structure of the United States. Noah and his seed, the children of Hagar are left to endlessly, and, possibly, unsuccessfully seek

out Abraham's blessing. Adam, Noah's grandson, can be read as an Ishmael figure. The child clings to a paper shopping bag filled with objects and mementos holding little material value. This possession is the only real sense of home he has, and his clinging to these objects casts a refraction that exposes the coupling of the condemnation of black boyhood/manhood with the acquisition of material things. His shopping bag and the remnants of his short past, alongside the trauma of separation and abandonment, situate the young Adam as the disinherited child of Hagar. His absent father, Caleb, whom we are led to believe suffered from addiction, is unrecoverable and exists only as a memory, much like the figure of Ike in the title story.

The similar pining for a better life juxtaposed with an intense suffering is brought to the mid-twentieth century in "All Aunt Hagar's Children." The narrator, a veteran of the Korean war, has aspirations of going to Alaska in search of gold, but his intentions to leave are thwarted by a request to help with the investigation of a murdered peer. The murdered man's mother, Miss Agatha, is a close friend of the narrator's mother, and as the story unfolds we learn of the struggles and endurance of the women's lives and the lives of their family members. In the midst of that, Jones offers a counterpart to Hagar and her children in the form of a Jewish employer and his wife and a dead woman who haunts the narrator's dreams. This direct positioning of a son of Isaac next to the symbolic son of Ishmael further presents Jones' treatment of African Americans as Ishmaelites. This notion, in itself, operates as a refractor and speaks to the continued disenfranchisement and marginalization of black people in the United States. At the same time, Jones never abandons his treatment of the black middle class, particularly in the portrayal of the narrator's mother and his proud aunts, who have clear markers of the elevated black middle class. The narrator tells us that "the three women were all wearing gloves on that warm day; theirs may have been the last generation of Negro women to go about the world in

such a way” (104). The story gives us some indication of the status of the women, as we learn that Aunt Penny owned a grocery store and the narrator’s mother had and fulfilled a desire for upward mobility as she moved from one area of D.C. to the next.

Again, in Jones’s fiction, black women are markers of the black middle class, and yet their lives are still marred by the killing of black men and a black society still under the threatening shadow of whiteness. Jones’s story exposes the paradox of life in the black middle class, and his problematizing of this status serves to show that the power of the black middle class is limited and merely works to maintain the hegemonic structure. Even though he is able to purchase a car that he likes and his brother Freddy is married with children and attending law school, his community none-the-less faces a psychic violence against blackness that is reminiscent of the nineteenth century. In fact, the narrator’s sharing the story of his mother and aunts’ fleeing the south reminds the reader that, like the slave Hagar, black women, and ultimately their children, are victims of a national injustice. The attack on the then fourteen-year-old Agatha, and his mother and aunt’s subsequent beating to near death of the white man that attempted to rape Agatha, presents a victimization and resilience that exists together in the lives of black people. At the same time, Jones does not simply present his characters as victims. When the narrator arrives at the conclusion that the murdered Ike, Agatha’s son, was likely killed by his own wife whose aspirations for a better life and status were inhibited by her husband’s addiction, we see, again, that the desires for status in the black middle class of women can ultimately end with the destruction of elements of black society.

Jones presents complexities in the depiction of Hagar and her generations; the scattered and multiplied tribe—American Ishmaelites—are represented in an array of ways, some even existing outside the realm of blackness (as is the case with Fern Elton’s family in *The Known*

World). His most recent collection of short stories marks many of the ways that black Americans continue to thirst for and seek a promise of a better life, and the texts' Neo-anticolonial Refractions—interrogating U.S. global economic and cultural hegemony—force a critical gaze on the twenty-first century and its repeated performance of injustices on Black America. It reveals a hegemonic structure in which the agency of the black middle class can be a tool of the very system it hopes to escape and resist.

5.7 Departure Points and 21st-century Currents: Into the Interior of Whiteness

Toni Morrison, in her landmark critical work *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, says, regarding discourse in the realm of whiteness, “[m]ore interesting is what makes intellectual domination possible; how knowledge is transformed from invasion and conquest to revelation and choice; what ignites and informs the literary imagination, and what forces help establish the parameters of criticism” (8). Morrison is speaking to a discourse of whiteness that serves to create an idea of “other” and works to concrete that notion of the “other” as fact. These notions and ideas found in the works of the much venerated Thomas Jefferson and grounded in the racism of the Enlightenment that he so emulated, also served to maintain not just a cultural superiority but also an economic superiority that relied on that very discourse. The project of colonization and the venture of U.S. American slavery were legitimized through the systematic dehumanizing of people of color, and the emergence of a black middle class came under the auspices of that model. Michelle Cliff’s novel, which at times reads like a collection of short stories, offers a fictional account that dismantles the notion of Western superiority. Much like Morrison’s interrogation of the function of the white literary imagination, Cliff takes on the ideas which lay at the foundation of the Western canon and lacerates the principles which serve to buttress that institution. At the same time, she explores the contradictions of a middle class

person of color whose life is, at times, supported by that hegemonic structure. More importantly, this novel moves us to consider the anti-colonial threads in Caribbean literature and literature of the African Diaspora with an eye to exploring how contemporary Caribbean works speak to the twenty-first century permutation of empire, specifically its projects of neo-colonialism and globalization, in the Caribbean basin and beyond. It is particularly poignant to engage this discussion as we are at the heels of the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of Jamaica and Trinidad. While incomparable to the two hundred and ten years of, Haiti, the world's first Black Republic, these anniversaries, and the turmoil of mid-twentieth century decolonization from which they came, beg for a critical look at the twenty-first century.

Caribbean writers and thinkers of the last century resisted the modes of empire, specifically neo-colonialism which exploded across the region. In the landmark text *Resistance and Caribbean Literature*, Selwyn R. Cudjoe argued that “resistance [is] an aesthetic-political element of Caribbean Literature” (56). He opens with a quote by Fidel Castro:

We, a revolutionary people, value cultural and artistic creations in proportion to what they offer mankind, in proportion to their contribution to the revindication of man, the liberation of man, the happiness of man...Our evaluation is political. There can be no esthetic value in opposition to man. Esthetic value cannot exist in opposition to justice, in opposition to the welfare or in opposition to the happiness of man. It cannot exist! (Castro qtd. in Cudjoe 56)

Certainly, the cultural and artistic creations of Caribbean people have challenged global hegemony, most notably is Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, an evocative narrative of the colonial legacy and its present day role on the island of Antigua, which not only forms and

indictment of the exotic discourse of tropicalization⁸⁸ but also signifies on Caribbean subjugation and subsequent resistance from Haiti to Grenada.⁸⁹ The twenty-first century currents of this legacy of resistance—which is rooted in writings and works of Césaire and Fanon and enacted radically by Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Maurice Bishop and others—can be found in texts published in the last decade by Jamaicans like Michelle Cliff and Kei Miller, Kittitian-born, black British writer Caryl Phillips, and Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat, just to name a few. Among this cadre, you find a Caribbean people speaking for themselves and crying out against the neo-colonial practices that would continue shape the region and its Diaspora. More importantly, these contemporary works offer Neo-anticolonial Refractions that present us with clear images of the heredity of those orders of power. For example, Edwidge Danticat openly accuses U.S. American global policies against the Caribbean and its people. In what has been described as her “true-life epic” *Brother, I’m Dying*, Danticat offers a memoir of her family’s loss—the death of her uncle the man who raised her in Haiti—at the hand of U.S. Homeland Security. The story, like much of her work, also engages the twenty-year occupation of Haiti by U.S. forces as well as the numerous so-called political interventions which ultimately and repeatedly destabilized democracy on the island nation. It is worth considering whether or not some kind of precedent might have been set for the continued economic and cultural decimation of the Caribbean region the moment the first Black Republic was forced to pay reparations to France.

Michelle Cliff’s early novels, *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*, are narratives directly rooted in the struggle against oppression. William Tell Gifford’s *Narrative and the Nature of Worldview in the Clare Savage Novels of Michelle Cliff* investigates the worldview in Cliff’s novels and suggests that “worldviews depicted in the fictional works can be conceptually replete

and complex like worldviews held by human beings or implicit in nonfictional contexts” (2). While there is a dearth of scholarship on Cliffs recent fiction, Gifford’s argument might well apply, albeit in a further developed mode, as Cliff’s twenty-first century work is explicitly engaged with the current world order and the practice of domination. Her philosophical worldview is clearly counter-hegemonic. Michelle Cliff’s *Into the Interior* approaches the relationship between Europe, and, specifically, European discourse and actions and the subjugation of the African Diaspora. More importantly, her work questions the veracity of notions of European and Western superiority via the portrayal and, in some instances, the parodying of whiteness and white racist discourse. Cliff even draws out the perversity of whiteness. Her novel is broken into several vignettes, beginning with “Points of Departure,” that present a reverse-Conradian journey where the character leaves from a port on a Caribbean island (presumably Jamaica, based on familiar references) and travels “Into the Interior”—not to the pejoratively labeled “Dark Continent,” but to the interior of whiteness. The wide array of almost disconnected (if not for the narrator) experiences include a plethora of references to the art, literature, music, and philosophy that make up the Western canon, in addition to quotes and phrases culled from colonial adventurers and exploitations.

Cliff’s very short text, coupled with her unsettling depictions of white characters, highlights the superficial ways in which whiteness can appear. The early chapters map the narrator’s departure from her island home, and the chapters that follow offer refractions that indict the various pillars of white racist ideology. In “Marooned” the narrator shares the story of having attended “an institute of advanced learning” in which examples of European culture and style are juxtaposed with the crimes perpetuated at the hand of the various European colonial powers (29). For example, the narrator observes the “red and gold lapis. So comforting, all this

evidence of grandeur. So much easier on the eyes than a black-and-white photograph of Patrice Lumumba rotting in a fetal position in the trunk of a black sedan” (29). This instance creates a Neo-anticolonial Refraction in which the crimes of the colonizer are juxtaposed with the normalcy of whiteness, and it calls to mind Césaire’s assertion “that Europe [was] responsible before the human community for the highest heap of corpses of history” (*Discourse* 45). More importantly, the narrator is “Marooned” in the academic space where even the most atrocious crimes are normalized as a part of that very structure. The text reveals that like the narrator, there is a collection of marooned non-Europeans in the various museums and institutions the character visits. The story thus, casts a refraction to expose the pervasive and continued colonization of knowledge and culture.

Chapter seven, “Rex and Queenie” functions as a refraction in its entirety. The story begins, “Rex and Queenie thought their names better suited to a couple of dogs. And they were right. But being who they were, they kept them. And named their dogs Frank and Beryl” (72). The short narrative shares the story of a somewhat predatory couple who seeks out the narrator at she was “gazing at a quartet of Rothkos” at the Tate Gallery, “about as far away from the lapis and gold of the institute” (74). Even though the unnamed narrator has taken herself out of that space, she still encounters, what turns out to be, a couple that represents the atrocities of Europe. This Neo-Anticolonial Refraction speaks to the evolution and presence of a legacy of domination that persists in Europe and on the global scale. Again, the text calls to mind Césaire’s warning in *Discourse on Colonialism*. The story, in a Neo-anticolonial frame, complicates the presence of Rex and Queenie, who take the narrator to a Russian restaurant. We are told:

The outside of the restaurant was painted a dark red, including the window panes. The door was heavy, black. Inside the walls were

covered with photographs and watery prints of the River Neva and the Heritage and Kremlin...One wall was a photograph of the Russian grand duchesses after their faces had been blown off by the Red Army and before their remains met with quicklime” (76).

The photographs, signaling the murder of Tsarist Russia and the advent of the Soviet Union, along with Rex and Queenie’s intimacy with the establishment’s owner, initially gives the impression that the couple was communist. However, Cliff does not venerate communism in this context. Instead, the narrative emphasizes the brutality of European governments and juxtaposes that with the reality faced by people in the African Diaspora. The narrator tells us, “I turned my head and looked at the Russian girls once again. I had seen four murdered girls once before. In a 1963 newspaper on the headmistresses’s desk...The edges were beginning to yellow. BOMBING IN SUNDAY SCHOOL” (77). The narrator’s memory is reminiscent of Césaire’s comments about the barbarism of the United States surpassing that of Europe.⁹⁰ This Neo-anticolonial Refraction is particularly poignant as it fully underscores a reality of the twenty-first century. That is: the liberating aspects of Communism (or other European-shaped theories of egalitarianism) can never be seen as pure and unproblematic, and particularly in the twenty-first century, these efforts are often coupled with equally oppressive systems such as racist capitalism which mask as progressive and equally accessible. This becomes clear when we learn that Rex and Queenie were Nazis and spent the war in a bunker built by and for German soldiers on an island near the English Channel. The narrator is struck by their anti-Semitism and their reluctance to say what work they did for the Nazis, but her memory of an exchange with a Holocaust survivor leaves us with a spark of hope.

The final stories of the novel, “Runagate” and “Confluences” introduce the narrator to a woman named Catherine, and we are told that she had been a student of Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. (103). The narrative offers a number of signals, including the Dunbar connection, to expose Catherine’s revolutionary leanings. We later learn of her matriculation at an elite college, her experience with racial discrimination, and her role in the black arts and black power movements in the United States. By the time our narrator meets Catherine, the woman is a fugitive and apprehended by police in England for murder. Within the few pages that close *Into the Interior* the novel summons the legacy of “the women of Saint Domnigue” who “wear spirit levels on chains around their necks, signifying equality. The idea of seizing it for yourself” (121). Here, the text offers a refraction and images the signs of resistance that would effect a change in the discourse of the Western canon. The narrator finally says, “It gave me heart when I found that mirages could be photographed, that they resulted from the bending of light and were imaginary only insofar as every real thing was imaginary” (122). This final Neo-anticolonial Refraction of *Into the Interior* presents a True-True image of something that is present but often not named. Today, the Caribbean finds itself grappling with the un-named neo-imperialism, expanding globalization, and forms of subjugation which have yet to be encountered. Caribbean artists, writers, and filmmakers, are chronicling this reality—following their twenty-first century currents—tracing its nineteenth and twentieth-century capitalist heredity—offering, unintentionally or intentionally, a neo-anticolonial response that could potentially arm us, following Che Guevara’s position that “[a]bove all, always be capable of feeling deeply any injustice committed against anyone, anywhere in the world. This is the most beautiful quality in a revolutionary.”⁹¹

6 STRUGGLE FOR A NEW GLOBAL ORDER: DISCOURSE AND ACTIVISM AS CATALYSTS FOR REVOLUTION

The idea of equality is the only enduring principle by which mankind may be guided in the conduct of national and international affairs.

Michael Manley⁹²

Slavoj Žižek, in a talk given at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York, affirmed that “global capitalism is looking for a new model”⁹³. Žižek argued for the dropping of “old Marxist dogma,” in favor of a new approach that will dismantle what he sees as a new capitalism, and he challenged the audience to stop resisting while holding on to a fear of crisis. He went on to note that “there is a kind of resistance that is totally a part of the system.” In response to that last comment, I presented Žižek with the following question:

In the mid-twentieth century, anticolonialists like Aimé Césaire, for example, anticipated the evolution of capitalism that we see unfolding in the twenty-first century. He utilized Marx to speak to a white racist *Weltanschauung*⁹⁴ just as Fanon did with Lacan. At what point do we stop trying to retool Marx or Lacan? To what extent are their ideas, and our re-utilization of their ideas, a part of the very system of which you speak?

To my long question, Žižek gave a protracted answer in which he offered a critique of the “Western patronizing false anti-racists and native elites” of whom Fanon spoke, and he also talked about the negative aspects of the rhetoric of multiculturalism. Our discussion afterwards did not result in the unearthing of an answer to the question of re-utilizing extant theories and approaches, but it did lead me to consider the role and function of Neo-anticolonialism and the potential challenges that the move for a new paradigm poses. Even as Neo-anticolonialism rests

on a strong tradition of Black resistance—such as Black Marxism—which also challenged the European roots of that effort, as noted by Cedric J. Robinson, it bears asking the question: what is problematic about this gazing backward—the seeking out of Neo-anticolonial Refractions that in some ways contributes to the continuous production of discourse? How does this work radically depart from what has come before it? What can it accomplish that extant modes are incapable of fully realizing? What are the potential consequences of this dynamic? Just as Fanon discussed the effect of medical discourse on the colonial subject, here we must consider the effect of academic discourse or even the effect of the academic space, in which the colonial figure is a subject that is thrown, supine and eagerly disemboweled by a particular theoretical position. How does Neo-anticolonialism, as a literary approach avoid repeating the same theoretical violence of the past era?

Considering the legacies and collaborative efforts of twentieth-century revolutionaries such as Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, and Walter Rodney, Sylvia Wynter, and Aimé Césaire among others, to explore how academics can write about and participate in anti-capitalist resistance, is at the core of Neo-anticolonialism. Thus, literary analysis is guided by the desire and effort to do no harm and effectuate societal change; and for literary scholars the possibilities for collaboration, beyond the academy are most important for meaningful change to happen. In chapter five I explored the true-true narratives, the stories that emerge from a hidden or un-told existence to illustrate the ways in which Neo-anticolonialism might be able to shift the margins via revealing new stories. From the Neo-anticolonial Refractions in literary texts, one can envisage the ways that systems of oppression, like global capitalism, is able to mask itself in the guise of progress. This chapter took on the narratives of a black middle class that functions within this realm—ultimately buttressing the very system it hopes to escape.

Likewise, Chapters three and four served to delineate, by way of Neo-anticolonial Refractions in the texts, how racist capitalism functions to maintain power in a particular sphere and re-traumatize its victims in order to counteract resistance. In addition, the literary refractions reveal that the binaries of good and bad, oppressed and oppressor are troubled and even dismantled in the new world order. Thus, what appears as forward-moving can, in fact, lead to a stasis in the effort to bring about change. Furthermore, and more importantly, Neo-anticolonialism reveals the possibilities for engaging and counteracting this retrogression that is so pronounced in the twenty-first century. The entire project, and its aim to present and argue for a Neo-anticolonial shift in literary study, also affirms that, in order to mount a resistance that will leave the page, scholars must be able to engage with the communities of which they speak. Any response to twenty-first-century domination must, first and foremost, begin with a goal of carrying out real change outside of the academic space. Chapter two, in addition to presenting Neo-anticolonialism as literary study via the analysis of refractions, outlined how the Neo-anticolonial approach can offer tangible possibilities for the future. The dissertation focused on three Neo-anticolonial Refractions: the presentation of histories of oppression; the depiction of the re-traumatization of subjugated diasporas; the re-visions and re-tellings of narratives. These refractions, in unique ways, reveal that the legacy and project of an evolving capitalism has shaped and continues to affect experiences in each of the three modes. In addition to those three modes of refracting, Neo-anticolonialism also allows for additional areas of analysis not covered in this project. The Neo-anticolonial approach, as literary study urges a look at issues regarding gender and sexuality liberation, access to knowledge and information, theological and faith-based activism, and collaboration between fields of work and study.

At times the refractions in literature reveal the problematic elements of the early anti-colonials whose work serves as the foundation for this theory, but they never-the-less offer us a new look at the world order and the current problems and challenges of the twenty-first century. The presentation of these refractions is in no way comprehensive and does not seek to limit the search for new modes of resistance and inquiry. If we agree, after all, that the face and function of imperialism and colonialism has evolved and continues to evolve, then it would be right to say that Neo-anticolonialism, should, and will also evolve in order to combat the oppressive power structures. The further development of Neo-anticolonialism as an approach to literary study should be coupled with a Neo-anticolonial Movement that actively seeks to pair discourse with activism. Such a movement would produce a legion of Neo-anticolonialists from fields of study beyond literary scholarship and from broad and varied areas of work. The Neo-anticolonialist will seek out refractions in his or her own arenas and may or may not include those presented here. However, the Neo-anticolonialist will recognize the linked histories of oppression and will move to eradicate instances of trauma re-inflicted. She will call for and actively participate in shaping re-visions and re-histories of racist narratives and she will utilize those retellings to empower the subjugated victims of those histories. She will reconsider ideas and practices dealing with sexuality and gender liberation including questions about non-hetero identities and ideas of new femininities and masculinities.⁹⁵ She will consider contemporary theological and faith-based activism and seek out ways people of faith function as Neo-anticolonialists, even as their faiths carry the legacy of imperialism. She will move towards ensuring access to knowledge and information through various avenues including, but not limited to, formal educational systems. Most importantly, the Neo-anticolonialist will function with a broad collaboration across fields of work and interest. Indeed, this is the crux of the Neo-anticolonial

Movement. The Neo-anticolonialist must approach resistance from multiple positions. She must engage and be able to understand the values and concerns of multiple socio-cultural identities, and she must be able to see and comprehend how the neocolonial and neoimperial powers function within the spaces of diverse communities. More specifically, she has to understand how, as Said suggests, neoimperialism functions in systematic disciplines and indeed yields a systemic form of exploitation.⁹⁶

As I began this Neo-anticolonial work, it was initially most helpful to begin with my own field of discourse—gaining an understanding here—even as I reach out to other arenas. A study of literature coming out of places and spaces colonized under pre-twenty-first century imperialism offered me a way to see literary representations of systemic forms of exploitation. It is critical to note, again, that literary studies alone will not sustain a Neo-anticolonial Movement, but it will contribute a greater understanding, particularly to Neo-anticolonialists in other disciplines. I contend that the study of literature will serve as a bridge to the many avenues of the Movement, but this study taught me that the need for multiple bridges and numerous avenues for resistance is paramount to creating a formidable resistance. My inquiry and development of Neo-anticolonialism and its concepts revealed that every approach, whether it is literary or otherwise, needs to also be problematized and excavated for its own challenges to resistance. With a holistic and transparent approach, new forms of resistance are possible in Neo-anticolonialism. With that positioning, we will not remain in a postcolonial state where all the old trappings of the imperial colonizer continue to harangue and injure us along with the evolved neocolonial and neoimperial practices—but emerge with a new global order marked by justice and the worldwide advance for equality.

Notes

¹ A speech given by Che Guevara in Algeria in 1965. *The Che Guevara Reader*, ed. David Deutschmann.

² From *Discourse on Colonialism* 52

³ At a talk given at the Frankfurt Center for Research in Postcolonial Studies at Goethe-University on May 21, 2011, Gayatri Spivak talked about Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia as an utterance of the subaltern

⁴ Marc Lynch first used the term in a contemporary context to refer to the revolution in North Africa in an article entitled "Obama's Arab Spring"
http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/06/obamas_arab_spring

⁵ A self-described leaderless resistance movement, initially criticized as being made of predominantly white, privileged individuals <http://occupywallst.org/>

⁶ Online ratification ballot for 2012 <http://www.mla.org/>

⁷ Cedric J. Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* offers a thorough treatment in its first chapter "Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalist Development"

⁸ See Pankaj Mishra's "Watch This Man," a review of Ferguson's *Civilisation: The West and the Rest*, in *The London Review of Books* <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n21/pankaj-mishra/watch-this-man>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Stratton's essay, "The Beast of the Apocalypse: The Postcolonial Experience of the United States," appears in C. Richard King's *Postcolonial America*

¹¹ *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism In The Age Of Global Capitalism*

¹² From Ian Almond's unpublished essay "Anti-Capitalist Objections to the Postcolonial: Some Conciliatory Remarks on Žižek and Context"

¹³ From "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" 1971

¹⁴ A quote from book jacket Verso

¹⁵ After defining and developing the term, I encountered this brief review in which the term Neo-anticolonialism is used loosely and pejoratively.

¹⁶ See *Modern Fiction Studies* "Postcolonial Studies at the Twenty-Five Year Mark" 56:4 Winter 2010. Guest Editors Alfred J. López, Robert P Marzec, and David Chioni Moore consider and ask questions about the future of the postcolonial, including its capacity to speak to the era of globalization.

¹⁷ This project focuses on three areas of refraction, but Neo-anticolonialism, as I will address later, opens up the possibility for several avenues of resistance and several areas of refractions.

¹⁸ See Hunter, David G, and Constance E. West. *Last Minute Optics: A Concise Review of Optics, Refraction, and Contact Lenses*. Thorofare, NJ: SLACK Inc, 1996.

¹⁹ OED Online via GALILEO at Georgia State University

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See Robin D. G. Kelley's foreword to Robinson's *Black Marxism* xi

²² BBC interview Sunday 4th December 2011 on BBC World

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-noEjVuXeMk>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ngugi was named a Prisoner of Conscience by Amnesty International

<http://www.ngugiwathiongo.com/bio/bio-home.htm>

²⁵ A brief biography of the Adivasi from the People's Union for Civil Liberties

<http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Dalit-tribal/2003/adivasi.htm>

²⁶ *Pleasures of Exile* 107

²⁷ For my use of refraction see Hunter, David G, and Constance E. West. *Last Minute Optics: A Concise Review of Optics, Refraction, and Contact Lenses*. Thorofare, NJ: SLACK Inc, 1996

²⁸ See Ward, Abigail. *Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen and Fred D'aguiar: Representations of Slavery*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011.

²⁹ *Fathom* interview <http://www.fathom.com/feature/122056/index.html>

³⁰ See Renault in *Living Fanon* 106 and Gibson in *Living Fanon* 7

³¹ See, for example, Gibson, Nigel. *Fanon*. Oxford: Polity, 2003 and Azzedine Haddour's *The Fanon Reader: Frantz Fanon*. London: Pluto, 2006.

³² See Kelley's introduction to *Discourse on Colonialism* entitled "The Poetics of Anticolonialism"

³³ For literary analysis of texts exploring the *Windrush* generation see Dawson, Ashley. *Mongrel Nation: Diasporic Culture and the Making of Postcolonial Britain*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007, and for a study of immigration and the *SS Windrush* generation see Spencer, Ian R. G. *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

³⁴ See Bowles and Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*. While this focuses on the American academic (secondary space), the principle of capital and neo-liberalism driving the economy is useful here. Again, the Neo-anticolonial Refraction forces a look at the way that the academy becomes a participant in the continued project of empire. For a comparative look at England and

the United States see Soffer, Reba N. *History, Historians, and Conservatism in Britain and America: The Great War to Thatcher and Reagan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

³⁵ Du Bois introduces Double Consciousness in the African American context in *The Souls of Black Folk*

³⁶ See Deborah K King “Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology.” *Signs* 14.1 (1988): 42-72.

³⁷ Paul Gilroy *The Black Atlantic*

³⁸ See Du Bois’s definition of the veil in *The Souls of Black Folk*

³⁹ Deborah K King

⁴⁰ See *Black Skin, White Masks* 92

⁴¹ See Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean C. Passeron. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage Publications, 1977.

⁴² Patricia Hill Collins landmark work *Black Feminist Thought* had already been available for four years by the time Bergner’s essay was published.

⁴³ See Deborah K King “Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology.” *Signs* 14.1 (1988): 42-72.

⁴⁴ See Bundles, A'Lelia P. *On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker*. New York: Scribner, 2001.

⁴⁵ See Raimon, Eve A. *The “Tragic Mulatta” Revisited: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Antislavery Fiction*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2004.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the mammy figure see Hobson, Janell. *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

⁴⁷ While the women do not fit the physiological depiction of the mammy-figure, they are effectively made into mammy by virtue of their caring for and serving as surrogate mothers for their husbands

⁴⁸ See Manning Marable. *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society*. Boston: South End Press, 1983.

⁴⁹ From “On National Culture” in Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*

⁵⁰ See Fanon’s *Wretched* 25-27

⁵¹ Borrowing Spivak’s term “native informants” or Fanon’s “native intellectuals”—native capitalists use the tools of the oppressor and function within a structure created by the oppressor.

⁵² From a Q&A included in the paper back of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and on Adichie’s website at <http://www.halfofayellowsun.com/content.php?page=tsbtb&n=5&f=2>

⁵³ In a widely circulated letter to the Commonwealth Foundation Amitav Ghosh withdrew *The Glass Palace* from the Commonwealth Writers Prize 2001 competition citing his objection to the term commonwealth (and all that it connotes). The full text of the letter was reprinted on the Outlook India website. <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?211102>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ My revision of Fanon’s “native elites”

⁵⁷ From Fanon’s “On National Culture” in *Wretched of the Earth* 180

⁵⁸ *The Glass Palace* spans several eras and engages the histories of several wars, including the Anglo-Burmese wars (particularly the third) and the first and second World Wars as performed in the Burmese arena

⁵⁹ Adichie's talk, "The Danger of a Single Story", was recorded at the TED Global Conference in 2009. http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Adichie Bibliography at the University of Liège, Belgium

<http://www.l3.ulg.ac.be/adichie/index.html>

⁶² Chinua Achebe's comments are included on the cover of the paperback edition and on Adichie's website <http://www.halfofayellowsun.com/content.php?page=reviews&n=3&f=2>

⁶³ Adichie interview on <http://www.halfofayellowsun.com/content.php?page=tsbtb&n=5&f=2>

⁶⁴ Fanon's peasant class from *Wretched of the Earth*

⁶⁵ In reference to Gayatri Spivak's subaltern figure from "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

⁶⁶ See Fanon *Wretched of the Earth*

⁶⁷ See Johnson, Venice. *Heart Full of Grace: A Thousand Years of Black Wisdom*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. Print.

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ From Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack Monkey* 21

⁷⁰ See *Wretched of the Earth* 193

⁷¹ See Edward Said's *Orientalism*

⁷² "True-True" in Caribbean creole and Patois suggests a fact or the proper thing, as in the case of Merle Hodge's character in *Crick Crack Monkey* and her refusal to answer to anyone who did not call her by her True-True name.

⁷³ See Teele, James E. *E. Franklin Frazier and Black Bourgeoisie*. Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 2002, Platt, Tony. *E. Franklin Frazier Reconsidered*. New Brunswick N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991, and Washington, Robert E, and Donald Cunnigen. *Confronting*

the American Dilemma of Race: The Second Generation Black American Sociologists. Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 2002.

⁷⁴ See Woodson, Carter G. *Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830: Together with a Brief Treatment of the Free Negro*. Washington, D.C: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1925 and Woodson, Carter G. *Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830: Together with Absentee Ownership of Slaves in the United States in 1830*.

⁷⁵ *Black Creation Annual 1974-1975*: 90-92 interview with Toni Morrison and Alice Childress.

⁷⁶ Morgan, Kenneth. *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007

⁷⁷ A discussion of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of Symbolic Capital can further the understanding of Henry Townsend's "financial whiteness," in which his access to money allows him some of the privileges not afforded to black men in the antebellum United States. See Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984.

⁷⁸ See Hewitt's essay "Taking the True Woman Hostage" regarding the overuse of the notion of domesticity and Barbara Welter's study regarding the Cult of True Womanhood

⁷⁹ Jones interview on publisher's website

<http://www.harpercollins.com/author/authorExtra.aspx?authorID=5002&isbn13=9780060557546&displayType=bookinterview>

⁸⁰ Abram Harris *The Negro as Capitalist 3*

⁸¹ See the Old Testament book of Genesis for an introduction to Sarah's slave Hagar

⁸² From Louis Armstrong's song "Hagar" to Pauline Hopkins's nineteenth-century text *Hagar's Daughter*, African Americans have continuously engaged the story of the slave woman. It is

possible that Jones's use also offers a critique—a taking back of sorts of Aunt Hagar from Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

⁸³ Numerous antebellum field songs and spirituals engage Egypt and Israelites as analogies for the bondage in the American South. See *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*

⁸⁴ See the Old Testament book of Genesis for Hagar's initial attempt to return to Egypt

⁸⁵ See Irons, Charles F. *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

⁸⁶ See the Old Testament book Genesis for God's promise to Hagar that her generations would populate the earth

⁸⁷ Here, I intend its original Biblical meaning as well as a unique reference to President Abraham Lincoln in terms of the legacy of freedom he effected for African Americans

⁸⁸ See "Tropicalization" the introduction to Krista Thompson's *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006

⁸⁹ See Stephanie Black's film *Life and Debt* and Maingot, Anthony P, and Wilfredo Lozano. *The United States and the Caribbean: Transforming Hegemony and Sovereignty*. New York: Routledge, 2005

⁹⁰ *Discourse on Colonialism* 47

⁹¹ From the letter to his children, 1965

⁹² Prime Minister of Jamaica Michael Manley, Address to the 27th Session of the UN General Assembly, October 1972

⁹³ Žižek Slavoj. "2011: The Year of Dreaming Dangerously." Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York. 27 April 2012.

⁹⁴ German, *Weltanschauung* meaning “philosophy of life, outlook on life” See the *Langenscheidt Wörterbuch*

⁹⁵ Smith, Craig Adrian. “Scenes of Trauma: Violence, Sexuality and Performance of Afro-Caribbean Masculinities.” Diss. University of Florida, 2010.

⁹⁶ See Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1994.

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