

PRECARIOUS MOBILITIES

PRECARIOUS MOBILITIES: MAPPING SPACE, RACE, AND CLASS IN
CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LITERATURE AND FILM

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LAY ABSTRACT

This project critically examines the common portrayal of the decline of white working-class social mobility as caused by immigration and multiculturalism in British media, politics, and culture. In particular, this narrative of racially-caused social “immobility” cultivates a comparison between the postwar era, which was supposedly a time of working-class affluence, and the twenty-first century present, which is characterized through economic austerity and lack of opportunity for lower income communities. My dissertation counters this popular and politically motivated narrative by bringing together an archive of cultural material — literature, film, political speeches, and news media coverage — that provides a more nuanced description of interactions between the white working class and migrant communities in Britain from the postwar and contemporary eras. This thesis ultimately examines social mobility as a desire that mediates relationships between classed and racialized people under capitalism, rather than a pre-existing economic and social privilege that has been “taken away” by immigrants and the expansion of multiculturalism in Britain.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation brings together an archive of texts that both reflect and challenge the construction of a contemporary crisis of social mobility and working-class decline as a racial problem. British news media, political rhetoric, and creative work such as literature and film have increasingly represented the expansion of multicultural Britain, particularly after postwar decolonization, as responsible for the loss of the good life for the white working classes. In response to this causatively intertwined narrative of migrant mobilities and class stagnation, this doctoral project has developed an alternate dialogue between the present day and the postwar by examining social mobility as an affective genre in representations of race and class.

By exploring literary and cinematic representations of urban mobilities, the home, and the school, my thesis demonstrates the ways in which social mobility materializes as an affective structure that shapes the connections between white working-class and migrant communities in more nuanced ways than has been portrayed by British media and politicians. My analysis of literature and film reveals that the affective genre of social mobility since the postwar era has tended to shore up the continuation and preservation of white nationalism through the marginalization and continued exploitation of racialized subjects. And yet, although the contemporary rhetorical construct of social mobility and its apparently racially-caused endangerment utilizes the white working class as its litmus test and ultimate victim, what the narrative of the good (white) life obfuscates is its inaccessibility for not just the racialized other, but for the white working classes as well. Thus, while my project teases out the colonial structuring of relationships between white

working class and migrant and minority ethnic subjects within narratives of class desire, it also ultimately understands classed and racialized communities as jointly — if unevenly — impacted by capitalism.

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Introduction

In 2008, the BBC launched a series of films (five documentaries and one fictional film) called the “White Season.” According to its website, the White Season features a series of films that shine the spotlight on the white working class in Britain today. It examines why some feel increasingly marginalized [...] as newly arrived immigrants move in, the season examines the conflict between the communities and explores the economic and psychological tensions (*BBC 2* 2008).

The temporality conveyed by the White Season is especially intriguing; not only are the white working classes themselves portrayed as remnants of another era in the majority of the features, but also many films within the series seem to strike up a particular tension between the past (namely the mid-twentieth century) as a period of working-class vibrancy and political cohesion, and the present as its opposite: a time of labour redundancy and cultural marginalization. As critic Steph Lawler observes of the BBC series, “the privilege of the white working class (as white) has not disappeared but has been located in past time, so that in the present time they are cast as de-privileged by the winds of social change” (412). Lawler further argues that the White Season appears to claim that “a group of racialized and/or ‘foreign’ others might be benefiting from such change,” thus framing the “problem” of the white working class as one of race and immigration, rather than as a consequence of the clawing back of social services and the continued privileges enjoyed by the upper classes (412). This juxtaposition between the

decline of the white working class at the hands of a newly privileged and multitudinous population of “Others” is made clear in the BBC’s advertisements for the series, which display a white man’s face being rapidly covered by the phrase “Britain is changing” in different languages. In a crude symbolism of racialized invasion and the submersion of white identity, the man’s face eventually becomes entirely covered in black lettering until white skin is no longer visible.

This chronological comparison between a thriving and a declining working class is especially significant in one of the *White Season*’s features, Denys Blakeways’ hour-long documentary *Rivers of Blood*. The documentary’s narrator states at the outset that the intention of the film is to revisit Enoch Powell’s inflammatory 1968 speech of the same name “to better understand his argument.” Powell was a man of various roles, including, inter alia, a professor of classics, war veteran, Member of Parliament for the Conservative Party, Health Minister and Shadow Defense Secretary (among others). Although Powell vied for the position of Prime Minister, his ambition was aborted when he was removed from the Conservative cabinet after his delivery of “Rivers of Blood” in 1968. In the speech itself, Powell claimed there would be “rivers of blood” if “mass immigration” was permitted to continue (“Rivers of Blood”). Powell’s speech attempted to appeal to the white working classes in particular, as he argued that migrants from Britain’s ex-colonies would take their jobs, housing, and rights to other socialized services such as national health care. What seemed to be a primary anxiety for Powell was not just the issue of resource sharing, but of the destabilization of white British dominance. One of his most infamous lines from the speech was his prophecy that in

“fifteen or twenty years’ time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man” (Powell 1968).

Although Powell’s speech is perhaps best regarded as an indication of the pervasiveness of reactionary racism in British society, Nadine Attewell observes that the first decades of the twenty-first century “ha[ve] seen Powell partially rehabilitated” and his controversial speech “acclaimed, even from within the ostensible mainstream, as a prophetic call to action” (171). In a clear demonstration of Attewell’s remark, Blakeway’s documentary entertains Powell’s speech as a kind of visionary prediction of the state of Britain in the twenty-first century. In its opening scene, a narrator opines, “40 years on [after “Rivers of Blood”], in the wake of terror and riots, many are now asking, was Enoch Powell right to predict disaster in his Rivers of Blood speech?” The images that are paired with this statement suggest that the answer should be “yes,” including black and white grainy images of Muslim prayer (complete with sinister music), scenes of buildings and police officers on fire, and dramatic stills of post-July 7, 2005 destruction, including the hollow shell of an iconic Transport for London double decker bus and bloodied victims being helped by paramedics.

In addition to images of “division and violence,” another central claim of Blakeway’s documentary is that Powell was a champion of the working classes, one who attempted to change the course of their apparently immigration-created marginalization. Indeed, one of the film’s primary arguments is that Powell not only predicted riots and intercultural violence, but the redundancy and stagnation of white working-class labour and community. Showing clips from the 1960s of working-class allegiance to Powell

(including marches and interviews), the narrator claims that the working-class issues that Powell purportedly raised for attention — “pressures on housing, social services, and a loss of identity” — are “stronger than ever” in the twenty-first century. The documentary closes with a return to images of the July 7 bombing of public transit in London, which the narrator states was perpetrated by “four suicide bombers raised in multicultural Britain.” The final scenes show contemporary London at nighttime, with Powell’s image (disturbingly contorted in the furor of one of his speeches) superimposed on its modern buildings, and, eventually, ending up on the surface of the Thames — a heavy-handed metaphor for London’s own “River of Blood” — as if his so-called prescient warnings now haunt a city stricken by the darkness of Blakeway’s bogeyman, “multiculturalism.”

In essence, the coordinates that Blakeway (and the White Season more generally) lay out are those that I pursue and investigate in this dissertation. It is my intention to critique claims such as Blakeway’s that immigration since the postwar era has dispelled the working classes’ access to the good life and capacity to maintain a cohesive identity and community. Retrospective narratives such as Blakeway’s try to make sense of the past through the convergence of what Jordanna Bailkin calls the “major postwar narratives” (10) of modern British history since 1945, namely working-class social ascendancy through the newly built welfare state and postcolonial immigration into one racist metanarrative. This metanarrative, which implies causation between working-class decline and immigration (or multiculturalism), has two axes: the first develops the myth of universal working-class social ascendancy in the postwar era, and the second describes the dissolution of stability and welfare in a progressively multicultural, globalized Britain

(both of which I will describe shortly). My primary intervention is to challenge this causal connection between immigration, on the one hand, and the disintegration of white stability and white access to upward mobility, on the other.

My interest in creating a project that considers postwar and twenty-first century narratives of race and class together was motivated in part by two recent phenomena that are frequently represented as intertwined: the declaration of the end of social mobility and the “return” of class (and particularly identification with the “working class”) on the one hand, and the alarming rise of hate crimes, nationalist-fuelled xenophobia, and proclamations of the “death of multiculturalism” on the other. As I have already outlined in my description of Blakeway’s documentary *Rivers of Blood*, both the revival of class politics and right-wing fascism and anti-immigration populism tend to evoke a backward look at the era of the 1950s and 1960s. The nostalgic turn to the midcentury has been described by Paul Gilroy as part of the wider white nationalist desire to preserve “the exhilarating triumph over chaos and strangeness which that victory entails” (88).

Although here Gilroy references the contemporary sentimental remembrance of the Second World War and the Battle of Britain as a form of white nativism, particularly as it was reified after the July 7 bombings, nostalgia in other forms such as Blakeway’s return to Powell also conjure up a desire for a fictional pre-multicultural Britain. This return frequently manifests itself not only in terms of nostalgia, but also as a kind of investigation into the “origins” of a cultural problem or narrative such as social mobility or multiculturalism. In Blakeway’s documentary, for example, a return to the 1950s and 1960s is instigated in order to examine what is re-imagined as a tipping point into the

decline of white working-class communities (manifested through economic instability and barriers to social welfare) and the beginnings of “mass immigration” with all its purported ill effects on British cultural life.

My dissertation argues that histories of race and class since the postwar and postimperial eras cannot be described simply by conflict, competition, or what Althusser might call “contradiction.” In his essay “Contradiction and Overdetermination,” Althusser critiques the distillation of historical events or time periods into one of simple antagonism between two opposing forces, such as “Capital versus Labour.” These stories of simple contradiction fail to consider “all the elements that make up the concrete life of a historical epoch” (103). In the case of the historical epoch that I am analyzing — contemporary Britain since the postwar era — the inadequacy of representing postimperial immigration and the working classes’ desire for the good life through the simplifying lens of contradiction lies not only in the inaccuracy of this construction, but also in its support and continuation of nationwide racism while remaining uncritical of the current state of economic and social hierarchies and forms of exploitation in the UK. As my analysis of literature and other forms of cultural production shows, relationships between white working classes and migrant communities are instead lived as overlapping complexities of desire and disappointment, discrimination and intimacy, exploitation and solidarity.

To complete the Althusserian binary invoked above, I approach the lived experience of white working-class and migrant (or racialized) figures as *overdetermined* by a multiplicity of social, economic, and political structures. In particular, I interpret the

relationships between the white working classes and migrant communities in the UK as overdetermined by the desire for and labour towards social mobility. The cultural archive that I develop in my project consolidates around social mobility as what Raymond Williams calls a “structure of feeling” in *Marxism and Literature* (128). This term, which I explain in more detail further on in this introduction, connotes the lived experiences of a particular era that are not yet solidified into official descriptions or categorizations of that period or historical event. Importantly, Williams theorized that emergent structures of feeling are more visible in artistic mediums such as literature rather than, for example, historical documents or narratives circulated by the state and its institutions (130).

It is my argument that social mobility as a structure of feeling mediates the relationships between white working classes and racialized subjects. Social mobility operates in this archive as not a historical fact of the postwar welfare state that declined alongside the increasing globalization and multiculturalism of Britain, but an affective cluster of desire, vulnerability, and disappointment that is traceable from the postwar era to the present.¹ Like Peter Kalliney’s description of class in *Cities of Affluence and Anger* (2006), social mobility is at once an “objective relation” to one’s own material means and the material possibilities of what could be, as well as an “ideological disposition” that organizes feelings and relationships. As Kalliney argues, the tension between the material

¹ The concept of social mobility for the “common” classes does predate the mid-twentieth century, and is evident in works as early as the late nineteenth century. Some examples of this are Samuel Smiles’ *Self Help* and the dramas of class ascension played out in Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*. However, as I will detail shortly, there is nonetheless an arguable historical shift in the perceived accessibility of social mobility after the Second World War. It is the specific social coordinates of the concept of working class aspiration and upward mobility from the postwar era to the present that I examine here. For more on the iterations of social mobility in the twentieth century, see Bruce Robbins’ *Upward Mobility and the Common Good: A Literary History of the Welfare State* (2010).

and the ideological “becomes manifest through symbolic apparatuses, such as literary texts” (4). I follow this critical premise of both Kalliney’s and Williams’s in my approach to using literature and other forms of creative work to analyze cultural representations of class and race.

Social mobility as a structure of feeling may undoubtedly generate conflict between working-class whites and migrants; yet, these conflicts — and other modes of interaction — occur within spaces that are shared. Thus, the affective genre of desire for upward mobility is organized in this dissertation through key institutions of the good life that are also sites of interracial contact such as the home, the school, and public urban space. These sites reveal themselves in my analysis as intensified locations of the enduring pressures of inequality and precarity under capitalism, which I read as a shared and overlapping situation *despite* its dominant framing as a scene of working-class and migrant conflict and division.

This project examines literary responses to the popular memory of the postwar era as a time of opportunity and meritocracy for both the working classes and postcolonial British subjects. Each chapter of this dissertation examines the connection of three of these touchstones of social mobility — the ability to move freely through urban and social space, a respectable home, and an advantageous education — and the interpretation of the loss of these postwar promises in the latter half of the twenty-first century’s expansion in globalization and multiculturalism. Much like Blakeway’s own chronological arc, my project is similarly bookended by the postwar era on the one hand, and the terrorist attacks of July 7, 2005 on the other — albeit with a critical stance towards comparisons of

these eras that portray a crisis of immigrant takeover and working-class decline. In its historical reach from roughly the 1950s to the beginning of the twenty-first century, neoliberalism presents itself as a kind of historical turning point or division in my work as the texts that I analyze are either “before” or “after” its inception, which has been popularly attributed to the 1970s and 1980s. I am in agreement with the many scholars — from David Harvey to Stuart Hall — that have analyzed the economic and social changes both nationally and globally that have been brought about by the leadership of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. However, by utilizing Williams’ concept of “structures of feeling,” I argue that some of the affective structures commonly associated with the neoliberal — the desire for personal gain and the advancement of the individual, for example — were *felt* before British society’s transition from the welfare state to the neoliberal market state. As Williams describes, these structures “do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action” (132). Social mobility is the affective structure or genre that “exert[s] palpable pressures and set[s] effective limits” on the experiences and relationships between working-class whites and racialized subjects in the literary and cultural texts that I examine.²

² Although the white working classes and Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities are often represented as binary opposites in the discourses that I examine and interrogate, these constructs also intersect. For example, in the Ted Willis play I discuss in Chapter Two, *Hot Summer Night*, the workers represented in a main character’s factory are multi-ethnic. It is for this reason that I specify “white” working class where pertinent in my analysis, in order to avoid reiterating the assumption that the working classes are inherently white. See also Laura Tabili (2011) and Kathleen Paul (1997) on the racial intersectionality of working-class history in Britain.

It is the objective of this dissertation to interrogate and resist narratives that position postcolonial diaspora and multiculturalism in Britain against what I argue is a fictional downward trajectory from white working-class affluence and mobility to white working-class instability and decline. However, before I outline the contribution of my research project to the critical analysis of race and class in contemporary British literature and culture, I will first detail more fully the historical narratives of both class and immigration that I will be dealing with in this dissertation.

From the Postwar Welfare State and Working Class Affluence to the Twenty-First Century's End of Social Mobility

Of the two big stories that converge to produce the “ascendency and decline” narrative caused by immigration, the first is that of the heroic emergence of the welfare state in the postwar area and the glory days of what Lauren Berlant calls “democratic access to the good life” (*Cruel Optimism* 3). Although I am myself in support of the “common good embodied in the welfare state,” despite its many failures and imperfections, (Robbins xvi), I am also suspicious of the manner in which popular narrations of Britain’s postwar welfare state victory often set the stage for the causative narrative of immigration and multiculturalism’s threat to social welfare. As Bailkin argues in her examination of the colonial contexts of the welfare state, “welfare often functioned as a means of racial differentiation, as fears that migrants would abuse Britain’s welfare system were deployed to justify immigration restrictions” (3). In a more contemporary context, social welfare has been re-narrativized as the particular victory of

not any working class, but an “indigenous” white working class, who have now suffered the tragic loss of their rights and value within a nation supposedly preoccupied by immigration.³

Although the concept of social welfare has a history beyond that of the postwar era — hearkening back to social policies of the liberalist late-nineteenth century — much of what we understand today as what Derek Fraser calls the “classic” British welfare state was established in the period after the Second World War, up until its demise in the 1970s. With the Labour Party win in 1945, led by Prime Minister Clement Attlee, the welfare state project of this period sought to guarantee “freedom from fear of absolute poverty and universal access to services such as the NHS and secondary education” (Lowe 305), as well as affordable and state-subsidized housing, public transit, job seeker’s insurance, old age pension and assistance in child care, not to mention the making public of national industries such as fuel and steel production.

One of the most notable signals of the arrival of the welfare state was in 1948, with the implementation of the National Health Service (NHS), directed by Labour’s Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan. The story of Bevan’s rise is itself a testament to the shift in political priorities and the possibility for a more democratic society: the son of a Welsh coal miner, Bevan was a passionate socialist with a history of critique of the British establishment (Calder and Gass 2). That the interests of the nation’s working

³ For more on the representation of the white working classes as vulnerable and/or victimized vis a vis immigration, see Ben Pitcher, *The Politics of Multiculturalism* (2009); Imogen Tyler, *Revolting Subjects* (2013); Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (2011); Lisa McKenzie, *Getting By: Estates, Class, and Culture in Austerity Britain* (2014).

classes were being prioritized by the government — which even had some representation from the working class, as was the case with Bevan — signaled a change in British culture, particularly for those most economically and socially oppressed in Britain. Indeed, the welfare state of the postwar era is understood as a social security system made for the proletariat after their efforts and disproportionate losses during the Second World War.⁴ While these changes did create vast improvement in “the quality of lives of many” (Lowe 305), this improvement was not immediate: the economic life of the working classes remained fairly restricted and depressed in the aftermath of the war. From the nation’s bankruptcy to the devastation of British cities and populations, the first years after the Second World War had been described as a period of “shortages and grayness” (Judt 29). This period of disparity lasted roughly a decade after 1945; austerity measures such as food rationing did not lift until 1954, with meat being the last item to be removed from the list of rations (Hennessy 4; see also Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*).

However, due to Keynesian regulatory state measures such as the suppression of interest rates and the managing of war debt through liquidation and the exploitation of Commonwealth resources (Paul 3), as well as the growth in employment owing to labour shortages and government job-creation incentives, a period of economic growth that has been termed the “golden age of capitalism” followed the immediate postwar years of austerity (Marglin and Schor 40). Many politicians, as well as sociologists and historians both of the time period and of the present, have represented the working class in the mid-

⁴ Not only did members of the working class serve as soldiers in the war effort and labour in its industries, but working-class neighbourhoods, such as East London, were the most heavily bombed by German raids.

1950s and 1960s as living in an “age of affluence.” At a 1957 Conservative rally, then-Prime Minister Harold Macmillan famously declared that in the postwar economic boom, “most people have never had it so good” (Brooke 105). This rather bold statement does have some empirical support: numerous studies, including James Goldthorpe’s well-known series of 1960s studies on “the affluent worker” found that “the average real earnings of industrial workers had risen twenty percent between 1951-1958” (Goldthorpe 22). Moreover, these studies found that in this time of “full employment” and rising wages, “consumer durables” such as washing machines, refrigerators and lawn mowers increasingly entered the working-class home (22; see also Hennessy 2008, Sandbrook 2006). While the inclusion of the working class into the consumerist boom does not necessarily guarantee a better life, Peter Kalliney argues that in this time period, “being working class no longer meant leading a life of deprivation; on the contrary, it meant working hard and entering the world as a consumer of goods” (112). Thus for a brief period of time — roughly two and some decades between the lifting of rationing after the War and the oil crises of the early 1970s — many working-class people could not only “expect to be able to get work” upon leaving school (Rogaly and Taylor 4), but also have the ability to participate in a consumer world previously excluded to them.

More affordable commodities and a more standardized approach to basic needs purportedly brought about a bloodless revolution, where those less fortunate by birth could work their way to a similar social plane as the middle classes through their ability to purchase the same commodities, and partake in the same leisure activities and cultural interests. In what was called the “embourgeoisement thesis,” it was believed that larger

incomes and a more standardized quality of life across the board would result in lesser working-class solidarity and increased identification with middle-class social values and politics, such as voting Conservative or becoming more family-oriented rather than class-oriented (Goldthorpe 24; see also Giddens 315). For leftist, working-class scholars such as Richard Hoggart, the culture and politics of the laboring classes were in danger of becoming pacified and homogenized by mass media and an expanding consumer society into a “larger, culturally characterless class” (280). However, in Goldthorpe’s view, a unanimous change across the working classes did not, in fact, occur. Challenging the theory of embourgeoisement, Goldthorpe’s numerous qualitative studies found that the working classes, even if more wealthy, rarely identified or mingled with the middle classes. Moreover, their relative wealth was still less than that of “white collar” workers, and did not change the working class’ enduring position as a “mere instrument without control over the process of production,” even if “domination may be transfigured into administration” (16). Thus, in Goldthorpe’s view, despite the diffusion of overt forms of class hierarchies and oppressive working conditions at the surface, beneath this veneer of consumerism and expanding bureaucracy (which obscure the direct tensions between, for example, factory owner and factory worker) exists the continuation of working-class exploitation.

Whether or not consumer goods and increased wages in fact contributed to the decline of working class communalism, political identity and union activism, the “golden days” of working-class life, including increased social mobility and robust welfare state support, are frequently represented as coming to an end in the 1970s. Although historians

and sociologists may have varying opinions of the exact timing of this end of “classic” welfare and working-class prosperity, the welfare state’s demise is often pinpointed to 1976, when Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan declared that it was no longer possible to “spend your way out of a recession and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting government spending” (Lowe 1). In 1979, Margaret Thatcher won the elections and became Conservative Prime Minister for the next eleven years. In David Harvey’s words, Thatcher “plucked from the shadows of relative obscurity a particular doctrine that went under the name of ‘neoliberalism’ and transformed it into the central guiding principle of economic thought and management” (2). Continuing with Harvey’s much-used definition, neoliberalism is

a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (2)

Certainly, Thatcher’s government put many of these tenets of neoliberalism in practice with, for example, the privatization of previously public products and services — which lead to the eventual de-industrialization of Britain and the movement of industry and its labour overseas — the attack on “entrenched forms of class power” such as trade unions, and the depletion of funding for social services (Harvey 31).

As a result, poverty and unemployment escalated, with unemployment rates reaching a high in 1984 (Denman 6). Trade unions rapidly lost their power, as

exemplified by the violent miner's strike of 1984-85. This strike not only resulted in the division and segregation of workers' communities, as the strike itself was highly controversial, but also the end of coal as a public industry and a marker of the triumph of privatization under Thatcher. With the political and economic changes of the 70s and 80s, class itself appeared to go underground. Politicians from the late 1970s to the turn of the twenty-first century were quite insistent that the subject was all but closed, from Margaret Thatcher's assertion that there are "only individuals and families" (*Woman's Own* 1987) to Tony Blair's pronouncement that "the class war is over" (Bournemouth Speech 1999). Aside from the political optics of the end of class and the new reality of individualism and private interests, as the research of Eric Hobsbawm, Anthony Giddens, Stuart Hall, and many others demonstrate, the movement of industry overseas, the weakening of trade unions, the drift of the Labour party towards the so-called "Third Way" and the diffusion of class solidarity did indeed appear to signal if not the end, then at least a serious rupture in working-class culture and political presence.⁵ And yet, despite neoliberal capitalism's rather brief years of relative wealth and stability in the 1990s, after events such as the imperialist military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq (and the debts they incurred) in the early 2000s and the market crash of 2008, twenty-first century Britain's economy and society has been largely characterized by pronouncements of austerity, widening class margins, unemployment, and the continued erosion of the welfare state that was once

⁵ See Eric Hobsbawm, "The Forward March of Labour Halted?" (1978), Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (1988), Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies* (1981).

celebrated as “next to the monarchy as an unchallenged landmark in the political landscape” (Fraser 269).

In particular, journalists, sociologists and Labour politicians herald the twenty-first century “age of austerity” as a crisis point in social mobility. References are made to a “class ceiling,” which only a small percentage — the “one percent,” Occupy declared in 2011, or the “seven percent,” as is now favoured in current social analysis — are now able to cross (Savage 22 October 2015). The British government introduced the Social Mobility Commission in 2013 to study and consult what has been accepted as a crisis in the concept of a meritocracy, and “social mobility tsar” Alan Milburn recently argued that the current “generation of the young could be the first in fifty years to see social progress go into reverse” (15 May 2015). Recognizing that the illusion of a classless society can no longer be maintained, twenty-first century political leaders on both the left and the right have increasingly included “the working class” in their platforms and speeches, from Ed Milliband’s promise to “fight for the working people of this country” (2015) to Theresa May’s more recent declaration that her “vision of a truly meritocratic Britain” puts “the interests of ordinary working-class people first” (2016). As the sociologists Geoffrey Evans and Jonathan Mellon have discussed, in contrast to the relative economic boom of the late 1990s, where Labour politician John Prescott declared that “we’re all middle class now,” “post-crisis, post-recession Britain, with stagnant wages, part-time working, and zero-hours contracts” has reinvigorated a wider cultural identification with the “working class” (2). Whether or not this return to class-based identification and the widespread recognizance of Britain’s economic crisis will produce any changes in its socioeconomic

structure remains to be seen; thus far, the “return” of class (which of course never really left) has, if nothing else, inspired an intensification of racism in the discursive shaping of economic crises by the state, and the nostalgia for a fictional time before British multiculturalism. In the next subsection, I will briefly detail a short history of immigration and race relations since the formal end of the British Empire. This short history will not only provide the context of the shifting immigration and citizenship laws as they reflect state-sanctioned racism, but also provide a foundation from which to challenge popular narratives of immigration and multiculturalism as the culprit for the crisis of social mobility among the white working class.

Immigration and Multiculturalism after 1945

Although immigration to Britain had been happening long before the postwar era and the famous docking of the *Empire Windrush* — a ship carrying nearly 500 passengers from Jamaica to England — in 1948, the postwar era, which also marks a period of rapid decolonization across British colonies, has a particular place in the national memory of multiculturalism. I hesitate to describe, as Mike and Trevor Phillips have, postwar immigration as marking “the irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain,” as this perhaps falsely portrays Britain’s history of diversity as a sudden tide of unprecedented immigration that only occurred in the mid-twentieth century.⁶ However, in this section I would like to outline some of the mid-twentieth-century changes in immigration and citizenship policy, as well as describe some of the experiences and events of multicultural

⁶ “The irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain” is the subtitle of the Phillips’s book *Windrush* (2009).

Britain from the postwar period onward, in order to provide some background for the cultural analyses that I will undertake in subsequent chapters.

After the Second World War, the world system of the British Empire collapsed “with a speed and thoroughness” that was unanticipated and unprepared for (Schwartz 7). In the late 1940s, the British Nationality Bill (1948) granted British citizenship to subjects of the Commonwealth, formerly known as the British Empire. This bill acknowledged the “political realities of a decolonized and decolonizing world” — Egypt, Canada, India, Iraq, Israel, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Ireland and Pakistan would all declare independence before 1950 — at the same time that it tried to maintain the illusion of British sovereignty (Baucom 10). Under the new Commonwealth, immigration rose from 3,000 in 1953 to 46,800 in 1956. In 1961, Britain would, in turn, see 136,400 migrants from its former colonies, including Ireland, Jamaica, Nigeria, India and Pakistan (Turner 270). Many migrants of this era were recruited to fill labour shortages, particularly in public institutions of the welfare state such as London Transport and the National Health Service (Sinfield 143). If not directly recruited, many simply came to Britain in search of economic prosperity. Much like the welfare state’s construction as, in part, a necessary response to working-class war efforts and hardship, many postcolonial migrants “felt that they were coming to collect the reward for their faithfulness as British subjects,” a “reward” influenced by the “affluent and cosmopolitan life” in Britain that had been long mythologized by the British Empire (Dawson 2-3).

Although British race relations of this time period have often been favourably compared to that of other nations, such as the United States and South Africa, there is no

question that the Commonwealth migrants faced devastating racism in all areas of life in Britain, from workplaces and public settings, to the homes and streets in which they lived. Despite taking up manual labour positions that white Britons — including those of the working classes — no longer wanted due to the availability of better jobs, migrants were frequently characterized as taking employment opportunities away from the working classes.⁷ Moreover, despite these labour shortages, employment agencies often refused to hire workers of colour on the grounds that trade unions would be divided by the “imposition of coloured labour” (Paul 123).

Discrimination was also common in the housing market, where hopeful tenants were turned away on the basis of colour; migrant neighbourhoods were, moreover, heavily policed, and subject to hate crimes. Perhaps the most famous example of racist action in residential areas is the 1958 Notting Hill riots, which was apparently initiated by a domestic dispute between a mixed-race couple, and culminated in a week of violence, as white “mobs numbering the hundreds roamed the streets of Notting Hill [...] attacking any West Indian they could get their hands on” (Dawson 28). Rather than leading to an examination of racism across the nation, the 1958 riots instead instigated more stringent and racist immigration policies that stipulated regulations on Commonwealth migrants of colour. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 gave the state greater control over

⁷ This discrimination in the labour market is detailed in Sam Selvon’s novel *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). In a scene where the main character, Moses, goes to the Welfare office to find a job, another job seeker tells him that “on all the records of the boys, you will see mark on the top in red ink. J-A, Col. That mean you from Jamaica and you black. So that put the clerks in the know right away, you see [...] they don’t tell you outright that they don’t want any coloured fellars, they just say sorry the vacancy got filled” (29); in a later scene, another character is sent for work on the railways for storekeeping, but finds that he is expected by the white workers to “lift heavy iron” while the “soft clerical jobs” go to “them white fellars” (35).

who it would allow into the nation, based upon a series of conditions such as guaranteed employment, school admission, physical health, and/or demonstrated ability to support self and family (Part I, Section 2). The state could also control the length of stay for Commonwealth immigrants, and could very easily deport subjects for committing an “offence” (Part II, Section 6).

Due to the policy changes and manipulations of the elite, the 1960s and 1970s signaled a period of transformation from *ius soli*, or territorially-based citizenship that included British colonies and Commonwealth, to *ius sanguinis*, or citizenship based on an inherited national identity.⁸ The 1971 Immigration Bill evoked patriality to allow the state “to discriminate among various United Kingdom-and-Colonies citizens by reserving a right to abode in the United Kingdom only for those who had actually been born in the United Kingdom or one of whose parents or grandparents were born there” (Baucom 13). These changes in laws and policies around immigration and settlement rights were reflective of the growing popularity of xenophobia that found expression in powerful political leadership such as that of Enoch Powell, whom I have already discussed, and Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath (1970-1974), who frequently preached against immigration in his speeches and passed restrictive immigration legislation. Like Powell, Heath argued that migrants took jobs away from the white working classes, along

⁸ Despite these official markers of a shift between territory and race that Baucom focuses on, Nadine Attewell argues that reproductively-based citizenship was underway as a response to decolonization in the early twentieth century, and that the “*formal* egalitarianism” of the 1948 British Nationality Act was already being replaced in the 1950s (16).

with hospital beds and housing, and should be assisted in returning to their “home countries” (Brighton Speech 1969).

In 1981, British Parliament passed then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s British Nationality Act, which has been read by critics such as Ian Baucom, Kathleen Paul and Nadine Attewell as completing British immigration policy’s transition from *ius soli* to *ius sanguinis*. According to this Act, one was required to have at least one British citizen-parent in order to acquire the right of abode, as being born in Britain no longer guaranteed a person the right to become British. In Baucom’s words,

by adding the question “who were your ancestors?” to the question “where were you born?” (indeed, in many cases, making the former question more important), the act effectively guaranteed that most of those who would qualify as patrials would be the children or grandchildren of whites. (Baucom 13)

This policy change was reflective of the return to imperialist ideologies in the 1980s and the desire to “divorce England from its ‘overseas’ history” and “defend [it] against its erstwhile Empire” (Baucom 7). Thatcher’s attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism can perhaps be summarized by her notorious statement that the British are “really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture” (Thatcher 1978); this racist sentiment was reflected in the rise of hate crimes and violence among British populations in the 1970s and 1980s, including the New Cross Gate murder of several black teenagers during a house party (January 18 1981), and the riots that erupted in 1981 in response to police brutality, hate crimes, and the ghettoization of non-white communities. Much of this friction occurred between the

white working-class and black and Asian-Britons, as working-class whites “perceived the ‘black invasion’ as a major intrusion from an even more disadvantaged group into their limited economic, social and geographical space” (Hall 20), a perception that was heightened by the monetarist policies that kept much of the working class economically depressed.

Moving onward from the 1970s and 1980s, the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have seen the imperialist occupation of Middle Eastern nations such as Afghanistan and Iraq, the policing of immigrant and racialized communities after 9/11 and 7/7, and a growing refugee crisis that has been utilized by the British state as a justification for tightening citizenship laws and more heavily policing its borders and subjects. In the shadow of national deficit, military powers and “national cyber-security” are advanced, while the image of the “asylum seeker” is blamed for the country’s financial problems. Multiculturalism, which, as Gilroy has argued, appears alive and well in Britain, was pronounced a failure by Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron in his speech on terrorism in 2011. A diversity of race and religion, and not the state’s own involvement in imperialist violence overseas, is blamed for the bombings of 2005 and fundamentalist militant activity since. And, as I will now examine more closely, the supposed victimization of the white working class has emerged in contemporary racial politics as the core explanation for the rise in hate crimes, organized racist political groups such as the English Defense League and the British National Party, and the culminating moment in white British nationalism that brings us to the present: the withdrawal of Britain from the European Union, commonly known as “Brexit.” Although

the referendum in favour of Brexit happened after the bulk of my thesis was drafted, I will briefly discuss its implications to my project in my conclusion. Its existence is, however, evidence of the importance of the critical inquiry into the articulation of the politics of race and class in contemporary Britain that I engage with in this dissertation.

Histories of Working-Class Mobility and Postimperial Immigration Beyond Contradiction

My recounting of two of the overarching “big stories” that have been popularly brought together to create a postwar-to-present metanarrative of causation demonstrates the ways in which these stories are traditionally told in popular memory, by and through state legislation, and in some part, historical and sociological scholarship. These intensively reiterated storylines have, for the most part, entrenched themes. For example, the story of economic and social redistribution frequently marks the peak of the welfare state and working-class affluence as occurring in the 1950s and 1960s, and its decline and stagnation in the aftermath of the installation of neoliberalism in the 1970s, which has only intensified in its assault on social services and workers’ rights today. The historical arc that I have detailed regarding race and multiculturalism has also been shaped by reactionary narratives, both popularly and by the state, of racialized citizens impacting the British economy and white Britons’ opportunities, as well as white wellbeing and safety.⁹

⁹ Throughout this dissertation I will be predominantly using the term “race” as opposed to “ethnicity” in order to critique the pervasive biopolitical ideology in British politics and mainstream media that equates whiteness with Britishness, and non-whiteness with strangeness/otherness. Whereas ethnicity can become “a spice or taste that can be consumed” by a hegemonic white society (Ahmed *Strange Encounters* 117),

Although I critique the discursive construction of a crisis of (white) working-class social mobility as the result of immigration and multiculturalism, I do not wish to imply this connection necessarily originates with the working class, or is revealing of an inherent working-class racism. Quite the opposite, for I am in agreement with Ben Pitcher's argument that

the positioning of the white working class as the perpetrators of racism should lead us to question the efficacy of government policies that do not address themselves to the far more thorny issues of the institutional and structural foundations of racist practice, but instead substitute for them these shameful and easily prosecutable subjects, pariahs of twenty-first century multicultural Britain.

(96)

My research rests on the rigorous work of other scholars of race and class in twentieth and twenty-first century Britain that analyzes and resists the scapegoating of the British working class as perpetrators (as much as victims of) Britain's "race problem." Historians and social theorists have put forward important critiques of state-sanctioned racism and its displacement onto the working classes that are worth mentioning here. For example, Laura Tabili's examination of race and class under late imperialism challenges what she calls "common sense" narratives of racism. Tabili identifies these narratives (or myths) as first, the notion that contact between racially different groups will inherently produce conflict, and second, that the white working class were the originators of racism both

race operates in British public discourse and policy as a rigid and genetically inherited difference that is not incorporated into the concept of British nationhood, but is instead dichotomized and policed.

within the time period that Tabili examines, and throughout the rest of the twentieth century. Using research on the race-based policy construction and legal management of black and Indian workers during this time, Tabili demonstrates the ways in which popular racism was influenced, and even encouraged, by the racism of the British state.

In a postwar context, Kathleen Paul mobilizes a similar argument regarding the state sanctioning of racism and its displacement onto the white working class in *Whitewashing Britain*. Paul describes her book as challenging the “official picture” of postwar immigration restrictions as created by “popular racism” from an “illiberal public,” which forced the liberal elite to “alter the expansive formal nationality policy that allowed free entry into the United Kingdom to all British subjects” (xi). Paul counters this narrative by examining the manner in which “Britishness” was hierarchized and managed between different groups of people depending on their ethnic origin and skin colour by the “liberal elite,” even during the supposedly generous immigration policy of the late 1940s and 1950s. These authors’ historical and cultural analyses are integral to my own thinking through race and class in contemporary Britain, as they challenge common narratives of race and class relations and offer a critique of working-class racism as overdetermined by state policy and economic sanctions against the poor, even in the early days of the welfare state.

It is my aim to contribute to the scholarship on race and class relations in Britain after 1945 by critically examining the influence of dominant societal structures such as economy, immigration policy, and political rhetoric on “popular racism.” I will also complicate the concept of popular racism itself, by exploring how it was and continues to

be mediated by feelings such as desire, vulnerability, and despair. That is, the relationships that I examine between white classed subjects and racialized subjects are inflected with racism, but not always in the overt manner of rejection, violence, and harassment that is perhaps traditionally described (as in, for example, the Notting Hill riots or the hateful propaganda of the BNP). It is my argument that the aspiration construct of social mobility, particularly in its post-1945 rendering as the natural outcome of a classless society, has a more multitudinal influence on race and class relations of the postwar and beyond than has been acknowledged to date. I explore this complexity through a literary archive of the desire for the good life, its accompanying feelings of despair, anger, and hurt (among others), and its impact on race relations between white and racialized subjects.

The Uses of Literature in an Examination of Race and Class

Bailkin’s observation that although the postimperial and its relationship to migration and diversity in Britain has been “*felt or claimed to be out of sync*” with other aspects of the postwar — such as welfare — “they were *lived* very much in synchrony” (241) informs my own turn to cultural production such as fiction, life writing and film. Although Bailkin herself does not draw on the literary to explore how (apparently) differing historical narratives were lived holistically, I share Bruce Robbins’ view that literature “fill[s] in the missing emotional landscape of life among welfare-state institutions” (8), and particularly in my case, relationships between white working-class

subjects and racialized subjects within the welfare state.¹⁰ Drawing on scholarship of race and class to form the social and historical contexts for my readings, I turn to cultural production to think through the ways in which the concept of social mobility may operate as an affective structure or genre that mediates white working class and migrant relationships since the end of the Second World War and the social and economic changes that followed.

My use of the terms “structure of feeling” and “genre” to describe what I believe literature (and other forms of art) are able to convey that historical and sociological documentation may not derives from the theoretical work of Raymond Williams and, more recently, Lauren Berlant, who has adapted Williams’ concepts of culture and affect to address the formation of the social under neoliberalism in the twenty-first century. In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams uses the concept of “structures of feeling” to address what he sees as a problem of temporality and description, noting that “culture and society are expressed in a habitual past tense,” and therefore “analysis is [...] centred on relations between these produced institutions, formations, and experiences, so that now, as in that produced past, only the fixed explicit forms exist, and living presence is always, by definition, receding” (128). In his theory, patterns of affect and consciousness are formed and expressed before they are defined as categories of historical experience. Williams writes that structures of feeling capture a consciousness of “what is actually being lived” rather than what is recorded as official, and thus “do not have to await

¹⁰ My work does importantly differ from Robbins’ in that my focus is on race and immigration within the context of narratives of aspiration and social mobility within the welfare state.

definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action” (132). Literature and art are particularly expressive of structures of feeling because, as Williams writes, artistic production is not limited to reproducing “formal concepts of world-view or ideology” (although they are nonetheless present in art); as a more imaginative and creative medium, artistic production conveys more immediate aspects of sociality (145).

Williams’ description of cultural production as articulating affects, social structures and experiences beyond or beneath dominant societal formations is evident in contemporary scholarship on affect and cultural analysis. For example, Williams’ observations on the manner in which structures of feeling, although unfixed, may still exert limitations or pressure on actions and experiences is evident in how Berlant defines *genre*: “an aesthetic structure of affective expectation, an institution or formation that absorbs all kinds of small variations or modifications while promising that the persons transacting with it will experience the pleasure of encountering what they expected, with details varying the theme [...]” (*The Female Complaint* 4). Berlant describes her work on genre as exploring the “juxtapolitical”: cultures, affective experiences, and aesthetic categories that are in proximity to the political, but rarely cross over into its institutions. Berlant uses this formalist approach to cultural analysis in order to challenge the idea that “affective and emotional transactions that take place at home, on the street, and between intimates and strangers be deemed irrelevant to civil society unless they are somehow addressed in institutions” (8). Thus, Berlant’s exploration of aesthetic forms — literature, film, drama — through the concept of “juxtapolitical” genres seeks an understanding of

negotiating the process of survival, and the experience of historical pain and suffering “outside of the idiom of politics” (24). Much like Williams’ decoding of “structures of feeling” in literature and art, Berlant similarly analyzes cultural production as a site of emergent and alternative forms of the political and the social.

In this dissertation, I examine social mobility as both a genre and as a structure of feeling. In some ways, however, genre is a better-suited term for my project, as it conveys flexibility in the encoded affective and social structures it describes. Whereas Williams might call social mobility a “dominant” or “fixed form” narrative (121) in its ubiquitous sanctioning as the natural result of hard work and proper sociality — a narrative that intensified under Thatcher’s governance, with the expectations of individualism and self-making inherent to neoliberalism — Berlant’s use of genre regards even the most socially entrenched categories and institutions (such as, in her example, normative femininity) as diverse in the manner in which they are modified by — and modify — individual experiences and affects. Regardless, both “genre” and “structures of feeling” are useful concepts for my project’s examination of social mobility as it mediates the intimacies and conflicts between classed and racialized communities. Structures of feeling are not solidified as official narratives of historical experience, and yet, as Williams argues, still exert force on subjects’ relationships to each other and the world; similarly, Berlant’s concept of genre mediates the subject’s experience of the world and their relationship to others. It is through the creative and experiential mediums of literature, film, and drama (among other art forms) that these structures or genres of feeling and identification are revealed.

The cultural works that make up the primary texts of this dissertation, when read together, form an important counter-narrative to the story of immigration-caused working-class decline that I have described earlier in this introduction. The formulation of these texts into an archive of race, class, and social mobility in contemporary Britain allows me to identify and think through social structures that have remained residual or embedded through the postwar welfare state to the neoliberal present — such as colonialism, state-sanctioned competition for economic resources, and the enduring belief in democratic access to social mobility despite the repetition of experiences that say otherwise.¹¹ Discussing the twenty-first-century present in conjunction with the postwar past is particularly salient because, as Bailkin argues, “we are still living in the world that was made by the people [of the postwar era] and are carrying out many of their agendas. The postwar is thus still happening now” (6). What might such a statement mean to the popular understanding of a divide between the postwar welfare state and the postneoliberal “market state,” as Sally Tomlinson has called it? By utilizing Raymond Williams’ concept of “structures of feeling,” I argue that some of the attributes commonly associated with our own late capitalist moment — the coupling of desire with precarity, individualism over communalism, and the withdrawing of the state as a supportive apparatus, for example — were *felt* before British society’s “official” transition from the welfare state to the neoliberal state. Likewise, political structures deemed historical, such as colonialism and the working class, have persisted institutionally, affectively, and spatially in a modern era where they have often been pronounced dead or redundant.

¹¹ For more on the latter, see Lauren Berlant’s *Cruel Optimism* (2011).

In my discussions of race and class in this dissertation, I acknowledge that basic identifying terms such as “working classes” or “migrants” risk oversimplifying the compound and complicated subjectivities and experiences behind such categories. The histories and geographies of the people who migrate to Britain have shifted with both global politics and economics, and the relationships that Britain itself cultivates over time with the rest of the world. For example, many of the texts that I examine from the postwar era have a higher representation of subjects of Afro-Caribbean descent, who were often actively recruited by the British government to use their Commonwealth status to migrate to and labour within the metropole. By contrast, literature and film of the twenty-first century appears to be more occupied with the representation of ethnic communities of a South Asian and Middle Eastern demographic. This does not mean that there were no South Asian Britons in the 1950s, or that there are no first-generation Jamaican migrants today. Ethnic representation in literature and film, particularly when it is proliferated by artists and journalists from the dominant white British culture, has perhaps as much to do with the cultural politics of the time as of actual demographics — as may be the case with the growing volume of cultural texts that discuss or represent Muslim communities after 9/11 and July 7, such as Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*, Mohsin Hamad’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Claire Messud’s *The Emperor’s Children*, to name a few.¹²

¹² For more on the cultural politics of representation and literature, see Catherine Johnson’s articles for *The Guardian*, “Where are Britain’s Black Writers?” (5 December 2011), “The Books World is a Massive Diversity Fail — Here’s How to Change it” (17 June 2016), and Bernardine Evaristo’s critique of the British publishing industry and popular media through her advocacy work in *SpreadtheWord.org*.

Likewise, class has undergone many changes from the postwar era to the present. Although, as I have shown, there has been a notable return of the term “working class” in British popular media and politics today, the livelihoods and everyday life of the working class have undeniably changed since the 1950s. The descriptions of the working class from the British Left of this era — lead by the writing of E.P. Thompson, Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and others — are often organized around manual, industrial labour such as factory work and coal mining, a strong sense of trade unionism, and Labour politics. This is, of course, a rather masculine, and perhaps romanticized, view of working-class life of the early to mid-twentieth century. Such descriptions also rarely reflect the ethnic diversity of the working class, as historians such as Tabili and Paul have demonstrated. Kalliney argues that the focus on class in the postwar era was partly a response to the contraction of Empire and the need to forge a new identity for Britain, as it had defined itself so thoroughly against its colonies. Thus, “scholarship on the working class [...] functioned as a discourse of cultural distinctiveness during a moment of national self-reflection” brought on by the dissolution of the British Empire (12).

However, as nationalistic and idyllic as these “classic” characterizations of working-class life were, there is clearly a very real marked difference between the traditions of working-class labour in the mid-century and in the present. As I have explained earlier on in this introduction, the movement of industry overseas had a large impact on working-class life, so much so that it is often debated if there is even such thing as a “working” class anymore. In the “Great British Class Study,” a large survey of British classes conducted by a team of sociologists and backed by the BBC in 2013,

researchers argued that the traditional categories of class — particularly the definition of working class and middle class — were now “outdated.” Instead, there were now seven socioeconomic classes, rather than a general three. What was once the “traditional working class” has now, according to these researchers, been split into the categories of “emergent service worker” and “precariat,” with “working class” remaining as a smaller group, if only to reflect its “aging population” (240). These categories, while they may be debatable, reflect the important fact that labour and traditional forms of class identification have shifted with the economic politics of the times. What unites the new subsections of the less privileged is that they lack, on all accounts, economic stability. Even in the categories not labeled as “precariat,” the social and economic life of service workers and the aging traditional working class exhibits an absence of savings and a dependence on “relatively insecure occupations” (239). What unites all definitions of class over time is, perhaps obviously, its persistence: while the economically oppressed may now work in a restaurant chain or call center rather than a mine, the fact that they remain divided from — and likely never to enter into — the more affluent classes suggests a permanence of economic oppression that crosses the boundaries of time. Moreover, the inheritance of class-based oppression also remains a constant: the precariat and service worker are nearly always from families of a lower economic class (241-243). It is due to this persistence of economic oppression and class division that I have chosen to, for the most part, retain the phrase “working classes” in my project.

Another aspect of class that has generated much debate and critique is the notion of the “work” that shapes and divides it. Much of the labour that this thesis analyzes

follows from the feminist critiques of labour that include affect, care work, and social reproduction. The demands for acknowledgement and compensation for these types of labour form a core pillar of feminist activism and critique, from the American and British feminists' dismantlement of the so-called "happy housewives" of the 1950s to the 1970s "Wages for Housework" movement in Italy. For the latter group of feminists, including Sylvia Federici and Selma James, missing from leftist analyses of class-based oppression under capitalism was the reproduction of the labour force itself, which was performed by women and was largely unrecognized and unpaid. Roughly a decade after "Wages for Housework," Arlie Hochschild wrote *The Managed Heart*, in which she coined the term "emotional labour" to describe the element of appropriate affect that was a part of every service worker's job. Emotional labour — "the management of feeling to create publicly observable facial and bodily display" (7) — is part of the job, and thus has exchange value, but it is also simultaneously deemed a natural extension of the emotion-worker, who is more often than not female, and of a lower socioeconomic status. As Hochschild observes, the management of feeling as a necessary element to one's job is an especially gendered and classed burden:

to have higher status is to have a strong claim to rewards, including emotional rewards. It is also to have greater access to the means of enforcing claims. The deferential behavior of servants and women — the encouraging smiles, the attentive listening, the appreciative laughter, the comments of affirmation, admiration, or concern — comes to seem normal, even built into personality rather

than inherent in the kinds of exchange that low-status people commonly enter into. (84-85)

What this quotation makes perfectly, powerfully clear is not only that the burden of managing one's emotions and enhancing the emotional experience of others is part of a system of social hierarchy and subjugation, but also that this burden is constructed as *natural* to the make-up of subordinated selves. This observation is of course familiar to those invested in the long genealogy of feminist thought that reveals and rejects the stereotype of women as being innately nurturing and thus psychically and emotionally equipped to care for children, partners, and the elderly.¹³ In this stereotyping of “women’s work,” the aspect of “work” is of course downplayed; in the interest of maintaining an exploitable supply of caregivers and service workers, the work of care is constructed as a labour of love.

As I will elaborate in Chapter Three, the relationship between affect and work is not only endemic to the oppression of women, but to the experiences of people of colour as well. As Sara Ahmed points out in *The Promise of Happiness*, women and people of colour are not only relied upon as providers of service and care in nations such as the UK and the US, but are also tasked with managing their unhappiness in relation to racism and sexism in order to shore up the image of a cohesive nation, community, or family.

Particularly in the case of migrants, pointing out or expressing unhappiness under the racist conditions of white nationhood is represented in cultural texts as an impediment to

¹³ This feminist genealogy of labour critique is made up of thinkers such as Germaine Greer, Betty Friedan, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Silvia Federici, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Kathi Weeks, and Sara Ahmed, among many others.

belonging and inclusion within the postimperial nation. In her analysis of the British film *Bend it Like Beckham*, Ahmed argues, “the melancholic migrant’s fixation with injury is read as an obstacle not only to his own happiness [in this case, the British Asian father of the main character, who is wary of his daughter’s desire to play for a predominantly white soccer team], but also to the happiness of the generation to come, and even to national happiness” (144). Racialized subjects threaten the national image of happiness “because they are saturated by unhappy histories,” such as “histories of empire” (148). Rather than the institutions of the British nation working through these historical traumas, it is instead the racialized subject who must labour to erase such histories “under the sign of happiness” (Ahmed 159).¹⁴ Thus, much like Hochschild’s observation that female flight attendants’ need to continually manage their emotions in order to “reflect the company’s disposition — its confidence that its planes will not crash, its reassurance that departures and arrivals will be on time, its welcome and its invitation to return” (4), the migrant’s ability to “let go” of racism allows for the image of a democratic and tolerant Britain to prevail.

The cultural politics of emotion — to borrow phrasing from another of Ahmed’s works (2004) — also functions in relation to the modern subject’s relationship to capitalism and the desire for aspiration that I discuss throughout this dissertation.

Although I have already discussed Berlant’s work in relation to her theory of affective genre, her more recent work, *Cruel Optimism*, is formative of my own approach to affect,

¹⁴ See also Paul Gilroy’s *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2008) for more on Britain’s melancholic attachment to its colonial history (and present).

labour, and class aspiration. In this text, Berlant uses the term “cruel optimism” to name the generalized cultural feeling of the present, as it is experienced by the North American and European subjects Berlant focuses on. Cruel optimism is defined by the attachment to certain practices, beliefs and institutions as guarantees for the social acceptance and comfortable, stable, fulfilling life — shortened to simply “the good life” — that no longer exist in a neoliberal, late-capitalist society. In Berlant’s own words, people remain attached to “conventional good-life fantasies” of “enduring reciprocity in couples, families, political systems, institutions, markets, and at work” even though “the evidence of their instability, fragility, and dear cost abounds” (2). Chronologically, Berlant locates this crisis of failing institutions and our continued emotional attachment to them as a phenomenon of the 1990s and beyond, although historically the neoliberal turn and the end of the postwar social welfare contract is commonly located in the mid-1970s and 1980s. From her vantage point of the twenty-first century, Berlant observes that the precarity of labour, class, citizenship, location and health are intimately connected to “the retraction, during the last three decades, of the social democratic promise of the post-Second World War period of United States and Europe” (3). Importantly, I deviate from Berlant’s representation of “cruel optimism” as a product of the neoliberal turn of the 1970s, as it is the argument of this thesis that social mobility produced an affective structure of cruel optimism even in the postwar era, at least in a British context. However, Berlant’s conceptualization of our attachment to the good life as an “optimistic relation” cruelly bound to “overwhelming and impending crises of life-building” (3) shapes my

own readings of the labour towards upward mobility and the identities and relations it forms as it is represented in British literature and film.

Guided by the theoretical work on affect, culture and labour described above, I approach social mobility as not an economic or social fact of British society after the Second World War, but a “moral-intimate-economic thing” (Berlant 2) that shapes the desires and motivations of the subjects I analyze, and the relationships between white working-class and migrant communities. Each chapter represents the structures of feeling generated by ideologies of social mobility and its relationship to race and class from different viewpoints and perspectives — including “traditional working class,” precariat, and upper-middle-class or “elite,” as well as postcolonial migrant, racial and/or religious other, and women — within my overarching time frame of post-1945 Britain. Such a diverse assemblage of texts not only allows for an examination of the different manners in which class might be ideologically constructed (as well as palpably lived), but also limns how race has been problematically implicated in the story of the decline of working-class mobility, which was, I argue, always already a tenuous promise at best.

This project begins with an examination of Ian McEwan’s *Saturday*, published in early 2005, alongside the media coverage of and political response to the subsequent July 7 attacks. As I will argue, both McEwan’s novel and popular response to the July 7 bombings represent working-class stagnation and multicultural Britain through the xenophobic and ideological metanarrative of racialized causation that I have described here. I examine this political event and literary work together not only for the similar way in which they represent relationships between race and class in the twenty-first century,

but also for the fact that *Saturday* was retrospectively hailed as predictive of the July 7 attacks. Rather than displaying evidence of McEwan’s prescient abilities, or the inevitability of an Islamic attack on the everyday working people of Britain, the novel resonates, I argue, with the political and cultural elite’s framing of July 7 insofar as both reiterate the narrative of working-class decline and immigrant “takeover” through metaphors of spatial mobility. As I will show, this scapegoating of multiculturalism and immigration in both McEwan’s *Saturday* and the responses to July 7 for the problems of contemporary Britain is also generative of a nostalgia for a fantastical (and historically non-existent) time “before multiculturalism,” a nostalgia that further propagates the myth of racialized causation for working-class social and economic precarity and the imagined loss of community.

The subsequent two chapters follow the backward turning and nostalgic plotlines analyzed in chapter one to the postwar era. My second and third chapters critique and nuance some of the representations of both working-class mobility in this time period, and narratives of conflict and competition between the white working classes and subjects of colour. However, the texts that I analyze do not convey stories of uniform solidarity and relationships of equality, either. Rather, they register a more complex structure of feeling that emerges in the welfare state and an increasingly globalized nation, one that is shaped through spaces at once ordinary and charged with expectations of optimism, upward mobility, and new identity formation both for the white working classes and postcolonial migrants. In Chapter Two, I examine how the home was culturally produced as a site of aspiration and socially mobile identity formation for working-class women of

the postwar era. This cultural construction was, I argue, at odds with the way in which the freedom for women to move up the class ladder is restricted, and even viewed as impossible, in the face of sexist welfare policies and the cultural stigmas associated with women who work outside the home, or who are not attached to a man. Thus, particularly for working-class women, optimism for the good life is a labour both sanctioned and denied by the British state. As I argue in this chapter, domestic struggles for inclusion in an (supposedly) emergent classless and modern British society are also struggles for a particular manifestation of whiteness that is both reaffirmed and contested in the texts that I examine. In the early 1960s film *Flame in the Street* and the 1970s autobiography *Landscape for a Good Woman*, “aspirational homes,” as I call them, are spaces of racial negotiation, where subjects of colour are incorporated into the labour of domestic ambition both as signs of downward mobility and as representatives of modern cosmopolitanism.

Lastly, Chapter Three analyzes the perspectives of new migrants to England, and their experience of bearing the emotional burden of white working-class despair within the space of the working-class school. Education was (and continues to be) a cornerstone of self-improvement and the attainment of a higher class standing; however, in the inner-city working-class schools that are represented in texts like *To Sir With Love*, *Black Teacher*, and the twenty-first century novel *Londonstani*, the lived experiences of the failure to achieve normative success through education and its attendant feelings of anger and despair are disproportionately managed by subjects of colour. Thus, in the contemporary representation of subjects of colour, and particularly those from Muslim

and East Asian backgrounds, as “taking over” public education and excelling in education to the detriment of their white working-class peers, this chapter argues that working-class education has a lived history from the postwar era onward of being supported by the emotional labour of racialized subjects. The anxiety about the school as a site of migrant upward mobility at the expense of the white working class, as my analysis will show, not only elides British education’s long history of emotional colonization, but also omits the way in which the persistence of poverty and the diminishment of institutional care and resources produce the feelings of vulnerability and despair that are attributed to a globalized Britain.

Although the shared spaces conveyed in each chapter might appear to reflect the friction and racial divisions that an increasingly popularized far right discourse describes and promotes, my analysis of these texts demonstrates that it is the affective genre of social mobility within a capitalistic society, rather than an inherent clash of “indigenous” whites versus invading racialized strangers, which structures problematic relationships between these communities. Furthermore, each chapter will complicate this popular description of conflict by showing how representations of working-class desire for upward mobility reproduces colonial hierarchies and relationships through unequal divisions of labour and the preservation of white ascendancy. Together, my chapters gesture towards the argument that the causative narrative of postcolonial migration and working-class decline after 1945 works through the occlusion of the political: that is, of an emergent neoliberal capitalism. Through the “juxtapolitical” (Berlant *Female* 24) spaces of city streets, the home, and the school, the cultural texts that I bring together here

reveal that the struggle for upward mobility, and the intimacies and tensions between diasporic and classed communities that it creates, are not evidence of an inherent conflict between the white working classes and racialized communities, but rather are defined by an increasingly economically and socially divided nation. However, the negotiations of making the good life under late capitalism are not evenly distributed; the affective relationships that I explore here between white working-class and diasporic subjects — textured by want, despair, vulnerability, and envy — are testament to the persistence of colonial relationships even within the overlapping conditions of precarity wrought by aspirations of a better life within the crisis of neoliberalism.

**Chapter One: “As Though on a Seesaw”: Race, Class, and Oppositional Mobilities
in Ian McEwan’s *Saturday* and the Political Response to July 7**

“*Movement is rarely just movement. It carries with it the burden of meaning*” – Tim
Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Western World* (6)

In this chapter, I look at the way in which spatial mobility has come to index a burgeoning, but largely imagined, crisis between the movement of migrants into the UK and the bottoming-out of working-class economic and cultural opportunity and meaning. In the Oxford English Dictionary, the first entry for the noun *mobility* elicits definitions such as “the ability to move or be moved,” “the capacity to move,” and “portability.” A bit further down, at definition “c.,” the *OED* defines mobility as “ease or freedom of movement; capacity for rapid or comfortable locomotion or travel” (2000). Particularly in the history of Britain, the freedom of movement and connotations of travel bound up in the term “mobility” are suggestive of its connection to Empire, as the means of worldwide locomotion allowed for Britain’s colonization and exploitation of territories beyond its island borders. Thus, mobility carries connotations of dominance. Even in its driest denotative form, “mobility” seems to already suggest a kind of privilege. Mobility is “comfortable”; the word’s very meaning embodies a sense of freedom and ease. Interestingly, the *OED*’s second entry for mobility, noted as now historical, defines it as meaning “the mob, the rabble; the common people; the working classes.” In the examples of historic usage from literature as early as the seventeenth century, mobility would have

even been used contemptuously as a pejorative term, and is in fact the root of “mob” itself. Yet, much like the reclamation of other discriminatory labels by oppressed or disenfranchised groups, E.P. Thompson notes in his seminal text *The Making of the English Working Class* that “mobility” was “a term proudly adopted by Radicals and Chartists” in the nineteenth century to refer to peaceful political demonstrations—perhaps a potential explanation for its contemporary use to denote a less rigid class structure and the flexibility of economic status.

Today, we often think of “class” when we think of “mobility.” To be socially mobile is to be able to improve your station through hard work or good fortune, or perhaps by making a good career move; the ability to imagine accumulating wealth and becoming socioeconomically mobile is arguably one of the major hinges upon which the appeal of Western capitalist culture swings (as it, of course, paradoxically creates the class hierarchies from which it promises to liberate us). And, while the definitions of “mobility” and “mob” have become divergent entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the fact that the modern understanding of “mobility” still produces definitions that concern both the physicality of movement as well as its more socioeconomic meaning — “the ability or potential for individuals within a society to move between different social levels” (*OED* 2000) — bespeaks a close connection between access to economically or culturally based privileges and the potential to move through space freely, securely, and comfortably.

While the official definition of mobility incorporates this aspect of *ease* and lack of obstacles or interruption, being mobile does not only equate to privilege, or even

something desirable. Mobility in the form of migration has become a source of anxiety and racism in the UK, particularly as global crises brought about by the fight over energy, economic instability, and other long-term effects of colonialism has given rise to populations' movement towards Britain and other nations in the West. While this chapter does not explicitly focus on mobility in terms of diaspora — although diaspora is undeniably implicated in issues around immigration and racism — I would like to borrow from Brah this move to question the structures that frame mobility, and the power dynamics that exist behind the representation of both spatial and socio-economic movement. In this chapter I use the term “white mobility” in the attempt to make the racialized aspect of the “ease” and “comfort” that appears to be intuitive in the *OED*'s definition of mobility more explicit. In complicating the idea of *who* is mobile by asking about the “when” and “how” of travel — that is, its social, political, and economic context—I would like to explore the social coordinates of mobility as they arise in two key “texts”: the 2005 novel by Ian McEwan, *Saturday*, which will take up the bulk of this chapter, and the more loosely conceived cultural “text,” the political and media response to the terrorist attack on London transit on July 7th, 2005.¹⁵

In the multitude of news updates, public addresses, and editorials that followed this tragic event, the 2005 London bombings were shaped and sensationalized as the diminishment of British mobility, safety, and cultural homogeneity. As one editorial on

¹⁵ Although the terrorist attacks in London on July 7, 2005 have been commonly phrased as “7/7,” I follow Ben Pitcher’s argument that “[b]y closely associating the London bombings with the North American attacks of 2001, it becomes easy to neglect the social and historical specificity of either event” (137). Thus, rather than use “7/7,” which becomes categorically aligned with “9/11,” I will instead use “July 7” to indicate the London bombings.

the bombing aggressively claimed, England (or “Londonistan,” as the article’s author writes¹⁶) has “become a safe haven for Islamic extremists” owing to the fact that “multiculturalism and political correctness has for years seen Britain segregated into inward-looking communities that eschew British values while the forces of law and order walk on eggshells” (*The Daily Mail*). Many critics and journalists have linked *Saturday* and the July 7 attacks because the former, published in February 2005, appears to predict a terrorist attack on London transit that would become a reality just a few months later; in a final scene in McEwan’s novel, his main character Henry Perowne imagines London is “waiting for its bomb,” which, Perowne thinks, might happen at rush hour, and on transit: “twisted rails, buckled, upraised commuter coaches, stretchers handed out through broken windows, the hospital’s Emergency Plan in action” (276). This interpretation of the novel arguably only supports the framing of immigration and multiculturalism as predictably dangerous and in need of being policed and expelled from an apparently beleaguered white nation. In contrast with this narrative, my reading sustains a critique of McEwan’s novel as representing the social and political coordinates of a racist narrative of white victimhood and class decline that the July 7 responses propagate.

In my consideration of *Saturday* and July 7, I also reflect upon mobility as a symbol of political and economic status, and the way in which spatial mobility has been metaphorically used to illustrate relationships between race and class in Britain — often in problematic ways. In the particular texts and events that I focus on, working class and

¹⁶ “Londonistan” is also the title of Melanie Phillips’s later book, which sensationally documents the so-called “rise of Islam” in Britain — a nation that inhabits, according to Phillips, a “victim culture” (2006).

migrant mobilities are represented as if on opposite ends of the same axis — or, to use McEwan’s metaphor in *Saturday*, “as if on a seesaw” (74). As I will demonstrate, both *Saturday* and responses to July 7 represent the underclass or working class as stagnating, declining, or unable to *move*, where movement, as I have described above, is laden with connotations of economic stability, freedom, and cultural value. As *Saturday* demonstrates, this is in opposition to the optimistic aspirations and material successes of characters who have migrated to Britain; in both *Saturday* and interpretations of July 7, others as both a threatening concept and as a physical presence appear to impinge repeatedly upon the mobilities of everyday British people, who, as I argue, are codified as white. However, I wonder if, in the insistence upon mobility as a privileged construct of Western values and freedoms, the presumption of mobility can always be causally linked to economic and social success, stability, or even survival. Thus, an underlying question in this discussion is whether this invocation of symmetry between spatial and social mobilities is not only potentially oversimplifying, but also problematically shifts and displaces the burden of crisis and failure onto bodies already underprivileged and oppressed.

Narratives of Race and Class in Ian McEwan’s *Saturday*

Ian McEwan’s 2004 novel *Saturday* follows a day in the life of an affluent and eminent neurosurgeon named Henry Perowne. This character is the epitome of white upper middle-class comfort and privilege. Perowne has a successful career, a healthy marriage to an equally successful lawyer wife, two artistically talented children — a

published poet daughter and Blues guitar protégé son — a large and beautiful home in Fitzrovia, a posh central London neighbourhood, and a Mercedes Benz sports car in the garage. However, this privileged life is not without its threats: beginning with Perowne’s witnessing of a crash-landed cargo plane, which resonates in his imagination with the airplane collisions of 9/11, and ending with a violent altercation between his family and a pair of thugs, *Saturday* positions its wealthy main character between two political narratives of twenty-first century Britain. The first involves the perceived threat of ethnic others, and the other the issue of class privilege. It is its consideration of these two weighty concerns that has lead critics such as Michael Ross to claim that *Saturday* is a novel that captures the “condition” of contemporary England — a condition that I suggest can be more accurately described as both an anxiety over the loss of white privilege, and the guilt and discomfort over the dissonance between the image of a democratic Britain, and the obvious persistence of class inequality.

The two narratives involving ethnic and working-class others do not at first appear to converge or affect one another in the novel: Perowne’s confrontation with a man named Baxter, which initiates a chain of events that culminate with Baxter’s invasion of Perowne’s lush Fitzrovia home, does not seem to have any correlation with the novel’s other thread of Islamic threat and the “stranger danger” that it represents (through Perowne’s consciousness) as inherent to a multicultural society.¹⁷ The

¹⁷ There has been some debate with regards to Baxter’s race. For example, Lynn Wells argues in her article “Ethical Underworld: Ian McEwan’s Fiction” (126; 2006) that Baxter may potentially be read as black. However, I am in agreement with other scholars (for example, Ryle) who read Baxter as white. Whiteness in *Saturday* is marked by its invisibility; all of the non-white people that McEwan encounters, whether they are passersby on the street or co-workers, are ethnically or nationally marked. Baxter, however, is only

separation of issues of class and race in *Saturday* seems to be so vast that reviewers and literary critics frequently declare that the novel is either “about” one or the other. Read as a novel about living in the aftermath of Islamic terrorism in the West, *Saturday* has been interpreted as an “allegory of the post-9/11 world” (Dirda 20 March 2005) and the belated “personal 9/11” of the main character, Henry Perowne (Ross 78). However, McEwan’s novel has also been interpreted with equal adamancy as a novel anxiously concerned with “social class in the nation” (Ryle 29). In his book *Evading Class in Contemporary British Literature* (2009), Lawrence Driscoll asserts that “the ‘terrorism’ at the heart of this novel comes *not* from the forces of Islamic jihad but simply from one white working-class man: Baxter” (46, my emphasis). Similarly, in Anna Beck’s examination of narratives of mobility as they are focused through race and class (2013), she utilizes *Saturday* as a case study of economic class (without mention of race), whereas *Brick Lane* (Monica Ali 2003) is the placeholder for Beck’s discussion of spatial mobility and race.

My own analysis of *Saturday* differs from these readings in that I prioritize how these two seemingly disparate threads of modern British life do in fact overlap to become part of the same narrative, instead of two isolated issues that discretely contribute to the “condition of England.” The problems associated with economic and racial others in this novel meet most obviously in the text itself through their implications of invasion, which, as I have argued above, tend to simply cast Baxter as a placeholder for the more threatening “jihadist” other that weighs heavily on Perowne’s mind throughout the novel.

given *class* markers such as smoking, going to a strip club, and, reminiscent of Victorian characterizations of class, physical appearance (Ryle 28). It is also, of course, worth noting that Perowne describes Baxter’s hand as “papery pale” (87).

In this chapter, I consider how the representation of the classed figure of Baxter as “invading other” is suggestive of the manner in which class disparity itself haunts the upper-class consciousness of the novel’s narrator. This haunted consciousness is, however, resolved by its displacement onto the postimperial and post-9/11 anxieties of a so-called takeover of Britain by racialized others. As I will demonstrate in what follows, the fate of Baxter becomes woven into the nation’s liberalist/phobic perception of ethnic others through the stagnancy of spatial and social mobility: by paralleling Baxter’s vulnerability — represented through his degenerative neurological condition, Huntington’s Disease, which Perowne pronounces makes Baxter “doomed” to a “helpless” and “meaningless end” (94) — with the growing presence and upward mobility of subjects of colour in the text, *Saturday* reiterates xenophobic discourses about the displacement of the British white working-class by migrants and other racial others. As I will ultimately argue, Perowne’s trepidation about his economic and geographical privilege is resolved by indirectly shifting this responsibility onto racialized others in the novel, who appear as actual characters, but also as an urban presence, and even an abstract threat.¹⁸ Importantly, these figures of multicultural Britain are not only rendered as highly mobile (both in the sense of migration, but more importantly, of aspiration and upward mobility as well), but also come to represent the impinging force of the outside world that ultimately displaces Britain’s “domestic” concerns (such as class inequality) and its people. First, however, I will break down *Saturday*’s treatment of class and race

¹⁸ The threat of otherness often manifests itself as part of Perowne’s imagination — he immediately assumes, for example, that the plane crash is the result of Islamic radical militant activity (McEwan 16); elsewhere, he complains that the anxiety regarding a potential terrorist attack

separately, in keeping with the text's seeming treatment of these issues as distinct and isolated from one another. Then, I will demonstrate how these identifiers are interwoven, and represented on the same axis in the novel, where migrant mobilities, and not economic inequalities, are held responsible for the deterioration of a symbolic English working class.

Toward a “Meaningless End”: Mobility and *Saturday*'s Class (un)Consciousness

In *Saturday*, the ease and enjoyment of navigability through urban space, as well as the frustrations produced by its impediment comes to shape nearly all of the events and interactions important to the novel. Perhaps one of the most recurring images in *Saturday* is street traffic, particularly in relation to cars. Despite his guilt and embarrassment over his car's proclamation of wealth, status, and mid-life masculine crisis (McEwan 75), Perowne “shamelessly...always enjoys the city from inside his car where the air is filtered and hi-fi music confers pathos on the humblest details.”¹⁹ While a “Schubert trio...dignif[ies] the narrow street [Perowne's] slipping down” (76), the comfortable position in the front seat of a Mercedes Benz becomes a privileged window through which we are given views of the city, conjuring de Certeau's argument that the windowpane “creates the spectator's distance” as well as a “bubble of panoptic and classifying power” (111). On his way to a more remote London suburb where his mother lives, Perowne observes everything from a neighbourhood that “once housed garment sweatshops and prostitutes” but now boasts “Greek, Turkish and Italian restaurants” (77),

to the view of a “horizon of tumbling cloud above a tumult of rooftops” with its lure of a “six days’ journey” afforded by a drive up an overpass (153). Interestingly, the scene’s representation of ethnic gentrification via fashionable Turkish or Greek restaurants replaces another and — from the perspective of Perowne — less cultivated immigrant and working class presence. As Judith Walkowitz has described in her work on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century London, garment factories and workshops in impoverished areas were frequently run by Jewish immigrants (22); the history of migrant labour in the London garment industry continued on into the twentieth century, and has only more recently “gone underground” as a result of sweatshop labour activism and awareness (Bender 190). These snapshots of London life thus notably repress histories of migrant and working-class labour and struggle as they are mediated through Perowne’s selective white upper-class consciousness, coupling the luxurious ease of the car’s movement with the myopic views of its affluent, liberalist driver.

The moments of spatial freedom in the novel that are conveyed through Perowne’s enjoyment of a luxury vehicle secure an image of his social power and privilege. As he drives through the city, Perowne claims to witness its scenes and its rhythms with “the remote possessiveness of a god,” buffered as he is by a shield of expensive steel and glass (13). However, as a mortal dweller of the city, Perowne is also subject to the turmoil and power dynamics of the nation-state. Despite the surplus capital Perowne has accumulated and its translation into accessibility and movement, he is, like all citizens of London on this particular day, immobilized by the “tens of thousands of strangers” that have taken possession of the city streets (72). The gridlock associated with the anti-war

demonstration are also what cause an automobile collision that will not only bring together the fates of Perowne and the novel's antagonist, Baxter, but also weave the narratives of classed and racialized "others" into an obstruction that threatens the flow of London's most mobile.²⁰

By the time *Saturday* was written, the denouncement of the very idea of class had nearly become cliché in British politics, as years of Tory politicians since Margaret Thatcher had labeled class struggle a fabricated "Communist concept" (*Newsweek* 1992). Even the New Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair (to whom Perowne is introduced in *Saturday* at the Tate Modern Gallery's opening night) declared in his victory speech to the Labour Party in 1999 that, on the cusp of the twenty-first century, "the class war is over" (*BBC* 28 September 1999). Although, as I will argue later on, the issue of class-based oppression is ultimately dismissed in this narrative and replaced by the supposedly more imminent threat of foreign invasion, class is not in itself invalidated as a form of cultural hierarchization in *Saturday*. Rather, class difference becomes a site of trauma and even potentially life-changing catastrophe for Perowne. The class system as a prevailing concept, alongside issues of multiculturalism and the Iraq War, is also part of Perowne's musings on the "condition of England" throughout his portentous Saturday. One key moment in this text involves Perowne's theorization of class "anosognosia," a psychological term used to describe "a lack of awareness of one's own condition"

²⁰ Daphne Jeyapal has also discussed the portrayal of a contradiction between multiculturalism and mobility in a Canadian context. In her examination of the 2009 Tamil protests against violence in north Sri Lanka in Toronto, Canada, Jeyapal argues that "[m]edia debates continually positioned the crisis in Sri Lanka against the convenience of commuters" (569).

(McEwan 74). Leaving his car to shop for the evening's dinner, Perowne notices a "pink-faced man of about his own age, in a baseball cap and yellow Day-Glo jacket, with a handcart, sweeping the gutter for the council." As the two men pass each other by,

their eyes meet briefly, neutrally. The whites of the sweeper's eyes are fringed with egg-yellow shading to red along the lids. For a vertiginous moment Henry feels himself bound to the other man, as though on a seesaw with him, pinned to an axis that could tip them into each other's life (74).

After this brief interaction with this man who is represented as a kind of less fortunate doppelganger of Perowne, the neurosurgeon muses that it must have been

restful...in another age, to be prosperous and believe that an all-knowing, supernatural force had allotted people to their stations in life. And not to see how that belief served your own prosperity (74)

Impelled by a degree of guilt about the opulence of his own life, Perowne seems to believe that the present age is one of awareness that class position is not a matter of divine intervention. As Anna Beck notes, "in present-day London, [Perowne] worries about his status almost constantly" (115). Yet, despite the similarities between the street cleaner and the affluent neurosurgeon, and Perowne's own critique of the historic belief that power structures are organized by godly purpose, his diagnosis of class difference is one based on the equally fateful concept of providence.²¹ "The streets need to be cleaned," thinks Perowne. "Let the unlucky enlist" (74).

²¹ Perowne's comment that it is luck that separates him and the street cleaner is resonant with the deterministic views on social class in the nineteenth century. The resonance between Perowne's own views

For “the unlucky,” there’s little room to move. Bad luck is not the language of opportunism, social mobility, or meritocracy. Bad luck can’t be politicized. This representation of class as a prevalent and not disappeared issue — in spite of Perowne’s disavowal of its material causes at the same time that he recognizes them — reflects contemporary political commentary that has arisen in recent years in the UK alongside the broader return of the topic of class to British politics.²² For example, in May 2012 former Labour health secretary Alan Milburn reported that social mobility continues to be “stagnant” in Britain, as graduates from private schools — the top seven percent of the population, economically speaking — retain a “stranglehold” on professional jobs (*The Independent* 30 May 2012); earlier in the twenty-first century, the UK was not only described as “dominated by class division” despite ten years of Labour government rule and declarations of an “opportunity society” (Glover), but also one of the most class-divided nations in the “industrialized world” (Ahmed).

Reflective of this current crisis of economic and social movement, McEwan’s representation of the working-class character Baxter, like the “unlucky” street cleaner, invokes social as well as physical entropy and degeneration. Although it is the reaction to Britain’s involvement in an international war that causes a life-changing collision for both upper and lower class characters alike in *Saturday*, it becomes clear that Perowne and Baxter’s claims to urban mobility and the chain of events that lead up to their collision are

and consciousness with a previous century’s is signposted throughout the novel; for example, we are told at the outset of the novel that Perowne is reading Charles Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* (McEwan 6). This thread of Victorian social determinism in *Saturday* will be discussed at more length further on in this chapter.

²² See, for example, Mike Savage’s *Social Class in the Twenty-First Century* (Penguin Books 2015).

not fully explained by “luck.” In fact, Perowne’s privileged access to mobility is the catalyst for the collision in the first place: en route to a squash game with a colleague, Perowne is stopped by a roadblock supervised by a policeman on a motorbike. Although the road is closed, the officer gives Perowne “a pursed tolerant smile that suggests he himself would have bombed Iraq long ago, and many countries besides,” and then “makes a gesture with his hand to say, Do it quickly then. What the hell,” allowing Perowne to continue on his path (McEwan 79-80).

After being given the privilege of crossing an otherwise inaccessible intersection into the next street, Perowne narrowly avoids a head-on crash with an oncoming car, instead scraping the wing mirror off of the other party’s vehicle and producing little damage to his own. The occupants of the other car are three men whom Perowne has already classed as part of an “unruly” demographic of “thugs,” “drug-dealers,” and “pimps,” and therefore potentially violent. This class judgment is moreover not only based on Perowne’s surface observations of the group’s habits and possessions, such as their ostentatious “series five BMW” and previous emergence from a strip club. However, if the class disparity between himself and these three men is an immediate source of both contempt and alarm for Perowne, then the leader of this group, Baxter, is also aware of this difference. When the two get out of their cars to discuss the accident, Perowne accuses Baxter of entering the road without looking; Baxter responds by stating: “I didn’t need to be looking, did I? The Tottenham Court Road’s closed. You aren’t supposed to be there” (89). Perowne’s movement from the direction of the police-blocked road — the special privilege of mobility granted him — is not in keeping with the rules that others are

forced to obey. However, his disdain eventually provokes Baxter and his friends to attack the doctor — no longer for his money, despite Perowne’s offer, but for “honour” (93).

Yet, Perowne is able to spare himself: in the moments up to this impending violence, he has been assessing Baxter’s movements, which have been characterized as twitching, restless, and spasmodic. In what seems like a dubiously swift assessment, Perowne diagnoses Baxter with Huntington’s Disease, an illness that Perowne guesses Baxter has not revealed, for fear of humiliation, to his friends. Testing his memory of the hereditary patterns of Huntington’s, Perowne tells Baxter, “your father had it. Now you’ve got it too” (94). This pronouncement, along with other revealing remarks, causes Baxter to interrupt Perowne’s impending beating and send his friends back to the car. Perowne further avoids danger by lying to Baxter that he may know of a drug that will cure him, and could thus be of help to Baxter. Even though Perowne assumes that Baxter himself does not fully believe him, Perowne acknowledges the irresistibility of a glimmer of optimism, however false, for those who are afflicted. Further adding to the image that Perowne has conjured of himself as an elite among a group of almost comically stereotypical and simple-minded folk, Perowne likens himself to a “witch doctor delivering a curse” (94). This curse not only has the power to save Perowne from serious injury or worse, but also, as I will explain below, produces peril for Baxter later in the novel.

That Perowne swiftly assesses Baxter as having a degenerative neurological disease is, importantly, predicated by his description of Baxter in terms seemingly reserved for an earlier age. Perowne portrays Baxter as having a “strong beard,” muzzle-

like mouth, and “general simian air [...] compounded by sloping shoulders” and “built-up trapezoids” (88); he is later described as having particularly hairy arms (87). The man is even dressed anachronistically, in “a sixties-style suit— tight cut, high lapels, flat fronted trousers worn from the hip” (88). This description of Baxter is not unlike the characterizations of the poor in the late-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, which portray these populations as subhuman and susceptible to criminal activity, as well as disease. In their discussions of what was termed “degeneration,” “progressives and paternalists [of the nineteenth and early twentieth century] concurred that the irretrievably poverty-stricken were distinguished by physical, linguistic and cultural traits that set them apart from the rest of the population” (Luckin 238). These traits ranged from

drunkenness, theft, persistent laziness, a tubercular diathesis, mental deficiency, deliberate moral obliquity, or general weakness of character manifested by want of initiative or energy or stamina and an inclination to attribute their misfortune to their own too great goodness and general bad luck. (Ledger 76)

Perowne’s description of Baxter echoes these classist nineteenth-century descriptions:

Baxter is not only registered as seedy and *déclassé* by Perowne via his association with a lap-dance club, “The Spearmint Rhino,” but is moreover read as potentially criminal given his hurried getaway from the club and the make of his car, which Perowne associates with drug-dealing (83). Another important historical parallel lies in Baxter’s neurological condition; as Bill Luckin argues in his analysis of degeneration theories in England, “[d]egenerationists believed that the very poor displayed inherited characteristics which predisposed them to potential physical and reproductive collapse”

(238). Much like this Victorian stereotype of the lower economic classes as genetically inferior and prone to physical and moral deterioration, Baxter's illness—a chromosomal disorder, or what Perowne calls a "faulty cog," "whisper of ruin" and "bad idea" in the logic of biology (McEwan 94), inherited by Baxter from his father—is literally one of slow physical and cognitive decline.

As we learn from Perowne's internal monologue during his initial confrontation with Baxter, Huntington's Disease takes "between ten and twenty years to complete [its] course," beginning with "small alterations of character, tremors in the hands and face, [and] emotional disturbance," and progressing to "helpless jerky dance-like movements, intellectual dilapidation, memory failure, agnosia, apraxia, dementia, total loss of muscular control, rigidity sometimes, nightmarish hallucinations and a meaningless end" (94). Mediated through Perowne's professional gaze, the trajectory of Baxter's life is only downward. Influenced by Darwin's biography, which we learn earlier in the novel that Perowne is reading (6), he describes Baxter's condition as "biological determinism at its finest" (93). Of course, Huntington's is not a neurological illness confined to the lower classes. It is indiscriminate in the socioeconomic brackets of its victims. However, if we are to take *Saturday*, as its many commentators have, as a novel that is invested in painting a "detailed portrait of an age" (Ryle 25), then it is not a stretch to suggest that the socially Darwinistic characterization of Baxter's fate as "determined" by an illness that literally effects his physical mobility is symbolic of the social stagnancy and widening class margins that still define Britain's social landscape. The staged conflict and resolution between Perowne and Baxter thus becomes symbolic of a wider struggle in

Britain for the social mobility of the economically disadvantaged.²³ Much like the rather fatalistic characterization of the street cleaner as occupying a social position comparable to a “dead end,” Baxter is very literally immobilized by his own (classed) body, which will only continue to fail him over time.

This representation of Baxter as predestined for a “meaningless end” is compounded by his ill-fated entanglement with Perowne, and his ultimate failure in pursuit of the better life that Perowne has tantalizingly promised him. As mentioned above, Perowne uses his diagnosis of Baxter as effective blackmail in order to avoid a potentially severe beating — an act that is at once an unethical abuse of professional authority and potentially understandable given the violence that Baxter and his gang have threatened against Perowne. Yet despite his brief and not particularly radicalizing recognition of British class hierarchies, Perowne fails to realize the power of his offer of a future for Baxter. Baxter’s interpretation of Perowne’s access to a cure is not only a promise of health, but also of an upwardly mobile life from which Baxter had hitherto been excluded. After Perowne’s professional knowledge allows him to get safely back in his car, he reflects upon Baxter rather condescendingly as “an intelligent man” who “gives the impression that, illness apart, he’s missed his chances, made some big mistakes and ended up in the wrong company” (98). Believing that he sees in Baxter “avidity” for “information, or for hope,” Perowne further assumes that Baxter displays a kind of awareness that he is — by Perowne’s estimation — “living the wrong life” (111).

²³ For more on social abjection and class inequality in a contemporary context, see Imogen Tyler, *Revolting Subjects* (2013).

Ideologies of hope and aspiration have been theorized in recent years by scholars such as Sara Ahmed (*The Promise of Happiness* 2010) and Lauren Berlant (*Cruel Optimism* 2012) as endemic to the political maintenance of docile or complicit subjectivities under neoliberal capitalism. “Cruel optimism” happens when the pursuit of “something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing” (Berlant 1). Adhering to a variety of cultural norms and narratives we take for granted, cruel optimism is generated in the search for “that moral-intimate-economic thing called ‘the good life,’” of which upward mobility is a key component (2). One of Berlant’s core lines of inquiry in her tracing of cruel optimism is her questioning as to “why people stay attached to conventional good-life fantasies...when the evidence of their instability, fragility, and dear cost abounds?” (2). The reason for such attachments is tentatively answered by Berlant as a kind of avoidance of cognitive dissonance between the material realities of one’s life and the genres of “goodness” that have become ideologically imposed. Sometimes fatal (or at least ruinous) attachment happens

because whatever the *content* of the attachment is, the continuity of its form provides something of the continuity of the subject’s sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world. (24)

Thus, even though Baxter himself, informed by doctors of the futility of his case, argues briefly with Perowne about the plausibility of a cure for Huntington’s, he is eventually duped into believing that he has a chance to survive. Piqued by Perowne’s promise of futurity—despite his doubts based on his own knowledge of his condition’s short

horizons—Baxter follows Perowne throughout his day until finally arriving at his luxurious home in Fitzrovia.

The scene where Baxter violently invades the Perowne household, is representative of not only the cruel optimism of Baxter's hope for survival, but also the novel's positioning of Baxter's negative social and physiological outlook as fated or predetermined. In Tim Gauthier's analysis of *Saturday*, he notes the manner in which Baxter's actions are rationalized as an effect of his illness, which "undermines the possibility that [Baxter] might have any other more complex justification for behaving as he does" (15). In the final altercation that takes place between Perowne and Baxter within Perowne's luxurious London home, this argument certainly holds true: Baxter's invasion with his accomplice, Nigel, is interpreted by Perowne as partially a consequence for embarrassing Baxter "in the street in front of his sidekicks" earlier that day (210); thus, Baxter's attack on the family is explained as a need to regain his pride "on the streets" (207). Another rationale for the break and entry is that Baxter is following "the lure of hope," as he also challenges Perowne to deliver his promise of a medical cure (216). Finally, Baxter's motives are ultimately depoliticized through the fatalism of his illness, as Baxter's behaviour is explained through his genes, or "the individual expressions of his condition: impulsiveness, poor self-control, paranoia, mood swings, depression balanced by outbursts of temper [...]" (210). Although Perowne may acknowledge, at varying times, his own wealth and privilege throughout the novel, Baxter is ultimately rendered a figure of biological determinism, and not class-based oppression and the stagnation of social mobility.

In addition to Perowne’s class-stereotyping and biologically deterministic rationalizations of Baxter’s attack, Perowne’s own stated beliefs throughout the novel regarding Britain’s “democratic access to the good life” (Berlant 3) can be read as diffusive of the potential class politics informing Baxter’s motives. This reading of Perowne’s investment in merit is argued for by Martin Ryle, who observes that

...conformably to Perowne’s faith in gradual improvement, *Saturday* shows Britain as a society where social advance is the due reward of talent. Perowne’s thoughts and memories piece together for us the backstory of his education and career, which has taken him from the obscure London suburb of Perivale to fashionable Fitzrovia, and which stands as an object lesson on the theme of progress[.] (30)

While I agree that Henry’s financial and personal successes are couched within the script of work ethic in *Saturday*, I would argue that the Perowne family also unbinds the weave of this narrative of progress by exposing its contradictions. Although the lives of Henry and Rosalind are continually framed by the demands of their professional careers, they are not exempt from the exclusivity of economic reward that politicians like Alan Milburn have taken pains to point out.²⁴ The very home the Perownes live in — as well as a summer chateau in southern France currently inhabited by Rosalind’s father (128) —has

²⁴ For a recent example, see “State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain,” a report chaired by Milburn.

not been purchased after years of mortgage payments, but inherited.²⁵ Upward “mobility” is not difficult when you have already started near the top.

Indeed, if Baxter’s actions are not socio-political in their obvious intent, the climactic invasion scene in the novel is rife with the symbolism of social immobility and class disparity. The passage begins with Baxter and his accomplice Nigel entering the Perowne household holding Rosalind, Henry Perowne’s wife, at knifepoint. As they enter the dining room, Perowne immediately begins to imagine what his home must look like to less-fortunate eyes:

the two bottles of champagne, the gin and the bowls of lemon and ice, the belittlingly high ceiling and its mouldings, the Bridget Riley prints flanking the Hodgkin, the muted lamps, the cherry wood floor beneath Persian rugs, the careless piles of serious books, the decades of polish in the thakat table (207).

The objects that Perowne quickly summarizes here not only suggest Perowne’s inherited wealth; they are also the accumulation of the inheritance of Empire. Echoing the colonial structure that Edward Said critiques in *Culture and Imperialism*, Perowne includes in this list of imported and costly items the “vulnerable and beloved flesh” of his own family. This relationship between Empire and the English “manor home” is developed by Said in the context of the nineteenth century novel *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen. Said argues that

²⁵ The novel does not state the Perowne home has been inherited outright, but it is implied that it was once owned by Perowne’s wife’s parents. For example, specific rooms in the house are identified as having once been Rosalind’s mother’s (66). When Rosalind’s father John comes to visit, he is referred to as the “landlord” checking on his “tenants” (196).

to hold and rule Mansfield Park [the English estate] is to hold and rule an imperial estate in close, not to say inevitable association with it. What assures the domestic tranquility and attractive harmony of one is the productivity and regulated discipline of the other (87).

If the discipline of the colony produces the domestic harmony of the manor home, then the dissolution of Empire and immigrant “takeover” of the colonial metropole underlies the vulnerability that Perowne ascribes to his family in this scene in *Saturday*.

If the unruly postcolonial world is implicit in this scene, it is explicitly read by Perowne through class difference. In surveying his worldly possessions in the presence of the classed figure of Baxter, Perowne assumes that “retribution could be large”(207); like the cure for Huntington’s, these trappings of the upper class are unattainable to Baxter and the class he represents. In order to avoid the infliction of more violence upon his family (Daisy has already been made to undress and the grandfather has suffered a broken nose), Perowne lies for the second time to Baxter, telling him that he has in his upstairs office documents that detail new research on a surgical procedure for Baxter’s disease. Playing effectively on Baxter’s hopeless desires, Baxter agrees and places Nigel in charge of the rest of the family in the dining room while he follows Perowne to his study upstairs — ascending, it would seem, to the possibility of a new life. This scene is reminiscent of E.M. Forster’s spatial metaphor of “upstairs” as an exclusive and inaccessible space for the upper classes in *Howards End*. Early in Forster’s novel, Leonard Bast (who has ambitions of improving his station) waits for the Schlegels at the foot of the stairs in their home, and becomes aware of their empty promise of social mobility:

all, all with their hands on the ropes. They had all passed up that narrow, rich staircase at Wickham Place to some ample room, whither he could never follow them, not if he read for ten hours a day. Oh, it was no good, this continual aspiration. Some are born cultured; the rest had better go in for whatever comes easy. To see life steadily and to see it whole was not for the likes of him (38).

Much like Leonard, Baxter is not able to linger long in this promise of a good life. Abiding by the definition of “cruel optimism,” Baxter’s attachment to a narrative of upward mobility proves detrimental. There is, of course, no new research. As Henry distracts Baxter in his office, his son Theo follows him up, and together father and son throw Baxter back down the stairs.²⁶ Importantly, Baxter’s free-fall down the stairs further links his character to Forster’s Leonard Bast, as Bast himself is fatally wounded by the owner of the titular manor home, *Howard’s End*. In the melodramatic slowed-down seconds of Baxter’s fall, Perowne “thinks he sees in the wide brown eyes a sorrowful accusation of betrayal. He, Henry Perowne, possesses so much — the work, the money, status, the home, above all, the family...and he has done nothing, given nothing to Baxter who has so little” (227). Yet, to follow the logic pursued by the novel, Baxter’s nearly fatal descent down the flight of stairs is only a poetic movement of what has always-already been occurring throughout Baxter’s life. Thus, Baxter’s fall evokes Leonard’s own trajectory in *Howards End* as both characters become victims of their entanglement with the upper class in their desire for a better life. However, as I will

²⁶ Importantly, Richard Brown (2008) has also made the Edwardian class connection between Baxter and *Mrs. Dalloway’s* Septimus Smith, who also invades an upper class dinner party with his shocking suicide — achieved, much like Baxter’s incident, by falling.

elaborate in the next section, Perowne's implication in Baxter's descent, despite its clear motions through the very classed space of the Perowne home, is displaced and absolved by Perowne's perspectives on race.

Terrorism, Migrant Mobility, and Threatened Whiteness

In *Saturday's* complex representation of urban social-spatial mobility in the twenty-first century (after the end of Empire, after 9/11), the stagnancy and decline of white-working class or underclass mobility is staged alongside the representation of an England vulnerable to Middle Eastern terrorism and multicultural demographics alike. Although class inequality is clearly represented in the novel, it is also ultimately displaced in Perowne's mind as an issue of the past, particularly in comparison to his constant anxious meditations on the threat of racialized and religious Others. In one of Perowne's inner dialogues between liberal and more conservative opinions, he swings from a critique of the hierarchies of bygone eras to a firm belief that life "[...] has steadily improved over the centuries for most people, despite the junkies and the beggars now" (77). This resolution on the progress and high quality of life in "the city," but also, we can assume, in the West more generally, is in response to Perowne's earlier train of thought on the "focused zeal" of religious extremists and the Muslim right's hatred of the "soft cities" of the West (73). Thus, for Perowne, the continued presence of poverty and despair in England — represented by the "beggars and junkies" — is overshadowed by the "real" crisis between the West as a symbol of progress, and Muslim nations as the antithesis — and even the potential destroyer — of Western civilization.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the physical and social mobility that Perowne associates with a Western capitalist democracy is contingent upon the security of the nation's borders, which Perowne fears have become increasingly vulnerable. This becomes apparent within the first few pages of the novel, where anxieties over the fate of white civilization merge with the spatial imagery of descent and destruction. In this opening scene, Perowne awakens in the early hours of Saturday morning and looks out upon the city from his bedroom window, marvelling at London as a "success, a brilliant invention," where millions of people are "teeming around the accumulated and layered achievements of the centuries, as though around a coral reef, sleeping, working, entertaining themselves, harmonious for the most part, nearly everyone wanting it to work" (5). Perowne's admiration of London and its harmonious, hard-working millions (a false sense of security, as I have shown above, given the domestic discontents of economic disparity) is interrupted by a burning plane that Perowne sees arc across the night sky. Perowne immediately believes he is seeing "unseen captives driven through the sky to the[ir] slaughter," an image that he observes is at once "familiar" and "novel" since the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City only eighteen months prior (16). In this scene, the airplane, as an image of modern technology that has become integral to the privilege of globalized mobility — "how else get to a conference in Southern California?" Perowne wonders (15) — has been transformed since the terrorist attacks into something "predatory or doomed" (16). Although the speculation that the enflamed aircraft Perowne watches emergency land over London was hijacked by Islamic terrorists proves false— it was, in fact, only a Russian cargo plane that had caught fire — this narrative of

“homeland insecurity” (Ross 1) becomes the novel’s affective frame, defining a white and privileged British imaginary as shaped by anxiety, xenophobia, and embattlement.

Importantly, as we see with the plane’s unfortunate crash and, as I discussed in the previous section, Baxter’s fated fall, this anxiety is expressed through spatial metaphors of descent and decline, stasis and obstruction.

As Perowne’s day continues, issues in the Middle East and the UK’s impending involvement with terrorism and the Iraq War palpably impact Perowne and the rest of the city’s population through the mass protest. Freedom and equal opportunity, demonstrated by the novel primarily through the ability to move, are portrayed as at risk of being slowed or arrested by the changing cultural and geopolitical landscape of the twenty-first century. Throughout the single day during which we catch glimpse of Perowne’s life, the inner core of London is gridlocked by hundreds of thousands of protestors that march the streets in response to Tony Blair’s decision to join the American war in Iraq. The Saturday in which this novel takes place is therefore a very specific one: February 15, 2003. Movement within the city, from the opening airplane accident to automobile traffic and public transit, is either imperiled, overtaxed, or at a standstill. Streets that are “usually empty at weekends” are now clogged by crawling cars and “the same nose-to-tail coaches [Perowne] saw on the news” (71); from the vantage point of his idling car, Perowne observes a crowd “swelled by hundreds disgorging from the tube station” and “merg[ing] into a darker mass” on the street (McEwan 72). Even though Perowne assumes that many of the protestors have little association with Iraq “or even know much about the place at all,” they nonetheless, in their representation of the crisis, become almost racialized as a

threatening “darker mass” (73) that arrests the freedom of movement of which Perowne is so accustomed.

Amidst these images of otherness as literally impacting spatial movement of the city, from the airplane accident (which Perowne imagines is racialized) to the gridlocked automobile traffic and overwhelmed public transit, characters of colour in the novel who are granted some degree of individual presence are nonetheless relegated to the margins of the novel. Although Perowne praises London as an example of harmonious racial and religious diversity (which he sees as a crucial component in its modernity and excellence), “*Saturday* is devoid of London’s vibrant multicultural scene” (Kowalski-Wallace 465). The few characters of colour mentioned include Perowne’s co-workers, from Rodney Browne, a neurosurgeon in residency from Guiana, and two “West Indian” hospital guards, to patients (Andrea Chapman, a young girl newly migrated from Nigeria) and acquaintances (such as Perowne’s friendship with Taleb, a victim of Saddam’s regime in Iraq). I am thus in agreement with Martin Ryle’s observation that Perowne’s portrait of British society carefully includes non-white characters who invariably figure as minor characters and are always signified by race or country of origin. In this way, Ryle observes that “[t]he novel is at pains to show the recent extension of opportunity beyond the white men who were the main beneficiaries of widening educational and career opportunities in the decades immediately after World War II” (30). Thus, the racialized figures in *Saturday* are at once nightmarish figures of terror, a “dark mass” that looms at

the edge of Perowne’s consciousness, and rather flat and superficial symbols of the success of British cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism after Empire.²⁷

Perowne’s ambivalence towards race clearly haunts him throughout the titular *Saturday*, especially as it culminates in his worry over whether the Iraq War is a justified destabilization of a sadistic dictator or an imperialist plot that endangers the lives of Iraqi civilians — a moral conundrum that literally presses down on him as protestors fill the streets and block roadways.²⁸ Perowne even complains of this pressure as a limit to his contemplative freedoms, stating that the post-9/11 world has effected a “narrowing of mental freedom, of his right to roam” (180). This conundrum resurfaces at the end of the novel, which closes out with Perowne once again rehearsing his debate between the inarguable terror of Saddam’s regime and “murky American motives” (277). As I will take up later in this chapter, Perowne’s struggle with his political views and his sense of the greyness of global ethics also leads to his anxious prediction of a large scale terrorist attack on London, which of course did indeed transpire months after the novel was published.

And yet, as many critics have pointed out, there is a kind of resolution or closure to Perowne’s day, despite his anxious musing on the future of London, and of Western civilization more generally (277). For example, in David Alderson’s analysis of *Saturday*, Perowne’s postimperialist ambivalence achieves equilibrium “in and through the family,”

²⁷ See Sara Ahmed’s *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (2012) for more on how racism is obscured by sanctioned diversity.

²⁸ I would agree here with Elizabeth Kowalski Wallace’s point that Perowne’s moral considerations are “less acknowledgements than rationalizations” for his own privilege and consumption (471).

which, when threatened by Baxter's invasion, eclipses all other moral debates and larger systemic crises (233). Although I agree with Alderson that the break-in scene does partially resolve the novel's larger sociopolitical concerns through asserting the sanctity of the home and the family, I also interpret this scene, and the novel more generally, as providing resolution for Perowne's own political and moral consciousness by displacing the systemic issues of race and class that *Saturday* raises onto the causative narrative of immigration and declining social mobility that I detailed in the introduction. Where elsewhere in the novel race and class are maintained as separate societal issues through Perowne's liberal humanist gaze, the home invasion scene entwines Perowne's perception of class with his ambivalence toward race, such that Perowne's mixture of Islamophobia and cosmopolitanism come to cohere around the classed figure of Baxter. Much like the racist descriptions of working-class atavism and decline that I discussed in my introduction, Perowne absolves himself from the politics of contemporary Britain through the nostalgic fantasy of a unified white British nation.

As I have detailed earlier, Baxter forces Perowne's daughter Daisy to undress with the implied intention of rape once he has broken into their home. However, the discovery that Daisy is pregnant — or “in the club” as Nigel puts it (219) — deters Baxter and his accomplice Nigel from physically assaulting her, as they are, Perowne guesses, “embarrasse[d]” and “disgust[ed]” by her condition (219). Instead, Baxter demands that Daisy read a work from her recently published book of poems, which the Perowne family was celebrating just previous to the break-in. Daisy only pretends to read one of her own works, perfectly reciting Matthew Arnold's “Dover Beach” (1867) in place of her own

poetry. This act not only subverts the demands of her assailants but also, in keeping with the novel's focus on the theme of diagnosing the English cultural condition, recites a poem that is deeply invested in England's political issues both internationally and at home in the nineteenth century.²⁹ Critics such as Lawrence Driscoll and Andrew Sanders have historically interpreted this poem as a "lament of the Victorian bourgeoisie in the face of a rising tide of political radicalism after the passage of the 1867 Reform Bill that extended the franchise to larger sections of the male working-class population" (Driscoll 52), contextualizing "Dover Beach" and the political upheaval of the late nineteenth century within the longer history of the class politics that unsettle Perowne in *Saturday*.

Baxter's violent invasion of the Perowne home is perhaps the kind of inter-class chaos that Arnold fears will happen (and *Howards End* represents) with the movement towards a political equality of the educated and cultivated rich with the uneducated and base poor. Yet, it is interestingly not Baxter Perowne thinks of when Daisy recites Arnold's poem, but the spectral non-white other that has haunted him since he had witnessed the burning plane in the early hours of the day. It is thus here that I diverge from Alderson's argument that this scene displaces racial and global politics, instead focusing on one "genetic loser[']s" threat to the family (Alderson 234). Rather, I interpret this scene as performing the opposite: the presence of Baxter is deciphered not through class-based anger or even the criminal acts of a single person, but through the anxious lens of a post-9/11 and Islamophobic world. While Daisy rehearses, Perowne mishears Arnold's words and thinks the poem is about "desert armies" landing on Dover Beach,

²⁹ For more on *Saturday* as a novel on the "condition of England," see Michael Ross, 2008.

imagining the pregnant Daisy and her unknown lover “listen[ing] to the surf roaring on the pebbles, and hear[ing] in the sound a deep sorrow which stretches right back to ancient times” (220). In Perowne’s fantastic interpretation of the poem, his pregnant daughter and the father of her child,³⁰ a kind of embodiment of Britain’s future, are mourning the loss of this historical time “when the earth was new and the sea consoling, and nothing came between man and God.” However,

this evening the lovers hear only sadness and loss in the sound of the waves breaking and retreating from the shore...they must love each other and be faithful, especially now they’re having a child, and when there’s no peace or certainty, and when the desert armies stand ready to fight. (220-221)

This connection of Victorian imperialism and nationalism with the anxieties of the twenty-first century conflict with Iraq (among other Middle Eastern and South Asian countries), particularly with its representation through white reproduction, can also be connected to the rapidly changing demographics of the UK that even *Saturday* acknowledges. The preservation of white lineage is conjured up as not only providing the contours of British horizons, both temporally and geopolitically, but is also figured as the primary defense of the British nation-state against its imagined Muslim assailants.

Although their vulnerability is enhanced by impending invasion, Perowne’s imagined lovers nonetheless stand at the nation’s border, like sentinels, armed with both the propagation of their race and the imperatives of love and faith — moral values that reflect

³⁰ It is worth noting that Perowne has already expressed misgivings about Daisy’s lover owing to his Italian heritage and his potential inability to be good enough for his daughter; these very ethnicized suspicions are, however, effectively “whitewashed” in Perowne’s fantasy of the couple facing the nation’s invasion.

Perowne's veneration of a free British democracy that I have described earlier in this chapter.

This modern interpretation of "Dover Beach" is also reflective of the anxiety about the permeability of British borders and the purity of British culture in the late nineteenth century. While Arnold's work has been read as primarily concerned with the internal class conflicts and of the nineteenth century, Paul Gilroy has argued in *Postcolonial Melancholia* that "Dover Beach" is also linked to the "exterior" tensions surrounding imperialism. According to Gilroy, the proximity of Dover Beach to "the alien presence" of France helps "concentrate [the speaker's] mind with regard to the country's historic responsibilities" as well as its relationship to the "global imperium" (Gilroy 91). The poem couples political consciousness and responsibility with the melancholic through its depiction of England as weighed down by its commitment to colonial projects: the imperial mission "re-created the national community in its modern form," but also drew the nation "into a terrible web of war and suffering, polluting its beautiful dreams, confusing and destabilizing it" (91).

Moreover, the historical context of "Dover Beach's" referent, the Reform Act of 1867, is important to consider in my analysis of contemporary imperialist themes in *Saturday*. The legal passing of this Act came at the crescendo of a series of large protests and political demonstrations, including the successful occupation of Hyde Park by over one hundred thousand Reform supporters in July of that year (Hall 12). Part of the motivation for the Reform and its demonstrations was the response to Edward John Eyre, Colonial Governor of Jamaica's massacre of five hundred protestors following the

Morant Bay uprising against the living conditions and political disenfranchisement of Jamaica's colonized subjects. Amongst the Reformers' demands was the motion that that Eyre become recognized and tried for the murder of British citizens (18).³¹ There is thus a clear symmetry between the protests that Arnold would have observed and repudiated in the late 1860s and the anti-war protest that Perowne finds himself in the midst of in 2005; the massacres perpetrated by Saddam Hussein, which Perowne recurs to consistently in *Saturday*, find some equivocation in Governor Eyre's own mass murder of Jamaicans. This historical parallel, of course, never occurs to Perowne, whose "anosognosia" — "a lack of awareness of one's own condition" (McEwan 74) — allows him to maintain his status and privilege in the world. Morant Bay, like histories of imperialism more broadly, remains a repressed narrative of British terrorism in the novel.

What appears to resonate most for Perowne in Arnold's poem is the Victorian poet's consternation over the cultural changes that reform signifies. In the context of the novel, the call for the termination of Britain's involvement in the American war in Iraq finds Perowne both spatially (due to the road blockages) and morally pressured by their presence and demands; this anti-war protest, coupled with the plane crash he witnessed, not only foments anxiety about the potential of terrorism and the growing presence of Islam, but also forces him to encounter the "uncultivated masses" of a different form — the angry and dangerous figure of the underclass via Baxter. A century earlier, during a time of working-class enfranchisement and a growing number of political demonstrations at home and in the colonies, Arnold had advocated for the regulatory presence of the state

³¹ Importantly, this demand was never met, and Eyre remained legally unaccountable.

as a means of controlling the “anarchic” impulses of the “raw and uncultivated masses” of British society (Arnold 58). As we know, Arnold was also a great advocate of literature as a means of managing such impulses and, from his perspective, improving society, as is argued, for example, in *Culture and Anarchy*. McEwan’s very deliberate placement of Arnold’s didactic poem within his own text on the “condition of England” during a time of global and national crisis is perhaps indicative of his alignment with Arnold regarding literature’s regulatory function within the nation. We see this function in action when, after hearing “Dover Beach,” Baxter’s criminal intentions are abated — he decides to only steal a book of poetry (McEwan 224) — and he can be lured by Perowne to look at research on Huntington’s Disease. In her analysis of *Saturday*, Sarah Brouillette argues that, reflective of New Labour’s turn to “arts and sport” to resolve conflict and inequality across the nation, culture is used in this scene “as a means of pacifying unrest” (Brouillette 177). Although Brouillette examines the presence of “Dover Beach” in McEwan’s novel as solely a “*class* fantasy of pacification” (177, my emphasis), my historical contextualization of the poem suggests that, coupled with Perowne’s anxious fixation on the spectre of terrorism, literature is also used here as a call to regulate and protect against dangerous Others that have (or might) permeate Britain’s borders. As McEwan has demonstrated in interviews, he is, like Perowne, wary of the vulnerability of a multicultural city like London, which McEwan believes is “impossible to defend” owing to its “racial mix” (Hage and Mattusek 2005).³² Thus, the author’s own published

³² Ten years later, in 2013, McEwan stated in an interview that his views have changed regarding the invasion of Iraq, and that he believes that the anti-war protestors have been “vindicated” (Dutta).

political statements, coupled with the privileging of Arnold's poem in *Saturday*, is suggestive of the fact that the novel is ultimately conservative and hegemony-maintaining in its presentation of issues of class and cultural diversity.

The symmetry between *Saturday* and its intertext "Dover Beach" moves beyond the potential motives of the texts' respective authors: despite Perowne's uncertainty as to whether this vast organized demonstration should be condemned or celebrated, his apprehension towards changing global hierarchies, and Britain's uncertain position within a twenty-first century world order, unquestionably resonates with Arnold's own fin-de-siècle fears. Intriguingly, this uncertainty over the disruption of national or ethnic order has consequences for definitions of class as a category of selfhood, and the struggles and injustices that occur under Britain's economic class system. In his consideration of "Dover Beach," Gilroy argues that the burdensome geopolitical responsibility depicted in Arnold's poem, having expanded alongside the widened margins of British territories, "contours a new arrangement in which immigration, war, and national identity began to challenge class hierarchy as the most significant themes from which the national identity would be assembled" (Gilroy 91). In *Saturday's* twenty-first century rendition of upper-class British cultural angst, the definition and difficulty of the nation through its negative relationship with "alien presences" is, in the present moment of its recitation by Daisy, most immediately applicable to the threat that Baxter presents to the affluent and cultivated Perowne family. Yet, Perowne's misrecognition of the poem as being about a Middle Eastern terrorist invasion of England is a clear repetition of his earlier misrecognition of the crash-landed plane as a terrorist attack. Thus, paranoid imaginings

of violent racialized Others repeatedly insert themselves in the novel as pressing issues, while clear evidence of class and race inequalities within Britain are repressed and evaded by Perowne's white upper-class consciousness.

The home invasion at the end of *Saturday* not only echoes the imperialist suppression of class conflicts and racism *within* the UK by focusing on racialized conflicts without, but also draws attention to the question of representation itself. Although we know, after Perowne's monologue on class consciousness, that this character does not assume that his position is socially or economically neutral, the novel's narrative style, which slides in and out of free indirect discourse, makes it difficult to develop the kind of critical distance from this protagonist that would make this novel's classist and racist ideology more apparent. As Brian McHale observes, free indirect discourse is characterized by a particular boundlessness between speaker and reader, which allows for a "mode of empathic identification with characters" (276) and so "may be motivated as reflecting a system of values of a highly homogenous culture, in which the novelist participates with others of her class and period" (274). Thus, Perowne's perceptions of issues of class and race become naturalized, and less obvious as the biased perspective of a small percentage of the population of London and more like "our" perspective, whoever the "us" associated with the reader is. This observation is in concurrence with Anna Beck's analysis of *Saturday's* reviewers and reception, where she argues that the novel is a kind of propaganda for the white British elite that, given its overwhelmingly positive reception, appears to generate an uncritical identification with Perowne's entitlement and worldview (119). Thus, via Perowne, the reader is persuaded

to identify and perhaps even comply with a conservatizing political hegemony that naturalizes the privileges of a minority elite. As I have argued in this chapter, the novel also represents any failures in the narrative of democratic access to opportunity and class movement as causally linked to the “invasion” of non-white others, and not the ongoing crisis of the uneven distribution of wealth.

Importantly, such comparisons are never named outright in the novel, but rather become part of the general atmosphere of contemporary London life that Perowne observes from the heights of his status and his ability to move freely through the city. And yet, even if the correlation between immigration and working-class decline is not made explicit by Perowne, the counterpoint between migrants and classed figures such as Baxter is still made clear by the fact that upward mobility is a defining feature of Perowne’s descriptions of characters of colour in the novel. Indeed, nearly all of the characters of colour in the novel are rendered vis-à-vis their aspirations: the Caribbean hospital guard is in training to become a paramedic (McEwan 245), and the young patient Andrea dreams of becoming a doctor, after Perowne’s skilled hands relieve her of her brain tumour (260). Taleb and Rodney are both characters that have immigrated to the UK for a British education and have successfully found work, with Taleb teaching history at a London university and Rodney in residency to become a neurosurgeon like Perowne. In fact, all of Perowne’s residents are either identified as new migrants or women (Rodney of course, but also Gita, and the more English-sounding Emily), an identification that perhaps indicates a new incoming generation of “minorities” that are replacing the existing white male workforce. These characters of colour are curated by Perowne as part

of his portrayal of a liberal nation that is solidly founded on principles of unprejudiced access to social mobility and the freedom of the autonomous and self-made subject, a portrayal that then casts protests against the state, animosity from the Middle East, and class-based violence and resentment as irrational if not perverse. Moreover, these descriptions are starkly contrasted with Perowne's parallel observations on the white and classed characters he encounters throughout his day, namely "junkies," the aged street sweeper, and Baxter, who are all, as I have discussed earlier, portrayed using the language of misfortune, degeneration, and socioeconomic stagnancy.

This oppositional balance between migrant and white underclass mobilities becomes particularly clear in the closing scene at Perowne's hospital. After Baxter has been taken to emergency following his fall down the Perownes' stairs, Perowne is called in to operate on him, as assumedly the hospital is unaware of Baxter's connection to the neurosurgeon. Perowne agrees to do it, and successfully stems the bleeding in Baxter's brain sustained from fall down the Perowne stairs. Once he is in recovery, Baxter's position is juxtaposed with another one of Perowne's patients, the Nigerian girl Andrea Chapman, who is visited by Perowne before he checks on Baxter one last time before leaving for home. Andrea is described as a "fourteen-year-old Nigerian girl" who is both a "problem niece" and a "problem patient." Having come to England to live with her aunt and uncle when she was twelve, Andrea is described as rejecting the "buttoned-down" demeanor of her conservative Nigerian village life for an urban British life of drinking, shoplifting, music, drugs, and "the street" (8). Echoing Perowne's judgment of Baxter, she too had made "bad choices," and also has a neurological condition—here a

benign tumour that was pressing on her brain—that is hypothesized as making her delinquent (8). However, unlike Baxter, the successful removal of her tumour transforms Andrea from a “problem” migrant prone to criminal culture to a “model minority.”³³ While Baxter lays dormant in intensive care, recovering from his injury but nonetheless continuing on his neurological path of slow decline and eventual immobility, Andrea is awake and lively, confiding to Perowne her desires to become a neurosurgeon. Together occupying space in a London hospital on the Saturday night that closes McEwan’s narrative, the hospital becomes a synecdoche for the city, or the nation, even. Although Beck characterizes Perowne’s workplace as a “heavily protected” element of his existence within the “private sphere” (116)—and indeed the installment of guards at the doors does connote to Perowne a new age of insecurity (244)—the hospital is a firm symbol of public life in the UK, institutionalized through the National Health Service in the socialized days of the postwar welfare state. As such, it is a perfect site for the representation of Andrea and Baxter’s parallel yet vastly divergent lives, symbolic as they are of a greater “condition of England.” If the divergence between these two characters’ medical outlooks and life aspirations were not enough, they are even arranged in the space of the hospital in accordance with their disparate mobilities: “one floor down from where Andrea Chapman dreams of being carried away by the improbable love of a young doctor, and of becoming one herself, lies Baxter in his private darkness, watched over by the constables” (277). Under the paternalistic gaze of Perowne — who is not only a figure

³³ See Jasbir Puar and Amit S. Rai, “The Making of a Model Minority: Perverse Projectiles Under the Spectre of (Counter)Terrorism.” *Social Text* 22.3 (2004) 75-104.

of British liberalism in that he is part of the white wealthy elite, but also with regards to his profession as a doctor and therefore representative of social service and state care — an aspirational and mobile postcolonial subject plans her socioeconomic ascension in the tolerant and “exceptional” British nation-state while her white working-class “double,” Baxter, quietly slides downwards into a fated oblivion.

This moment (coupled with other descriptions of social mobility for migrant Britons) does not overtly affirm or argue for a racist discourse of migrant mobilities as actively impeding white working-class access to social mobility which, at the time of the novel’s publication, was actively circulating in print media, political debates, and the rise of fascist groups such as the “English Defense League.”³⁴ And yet, it provides the social and political coordinates that such readings may rest upon. The concept of “mobility” and the cultural values that are attached to this idea in *Saturday* — freedom, success, and progress, but also migration, infiltration, overtaking or assailing — become the catalyst by which these disparate happenings (Baxter’s neurological illness; the successful career paths of migrant characters; the street-blocking protest against the Iraq War) join together, build narrative, and perhaps carefully divert other connections that implicate privilege, imperialism, or growing economic inequalities. Moreover, Baxter’s

³⁴ Anxiety over the impact of immigration on white working-class jobs and services, and the use of working-class well being as an arguing point for anti-immigration platforms has of course been present in Britain for a very long time. In the sociopolitical moment that *Saturday* was published within and responds to, the concept of “class” has (as I noted earlier) been “rediscovered” as an important political identity and demographic that requires attention (not to mention appeals for votes). This re-investment in the working class in the twenty-first century, and its purported endangerment by migrant mobilities, can be seen in *The Economist’s* reactionary article “Poor Whites: The Forgotten Underclass” or in the rise of extremist parties like the British National Party (see “White Voters are Deserting us for the BNP,” Melissa Kite 16 April 2006).

physiological decline and Andrea's described trajectory of optimistic futurity and likely success are balanced within the very conspicuous space of the hospital, representative as it is of the National Health Service—another postwar social initiative mobilized for the working classes. It is this ideological structure within *Saturday* that emerges in the context of the bombings of 7 July 2005 and public transit.

July 7 as an Attack on Mobility

As I have shown above, race and class, although disarticulated by Perowne through his belief in the biologically determined order of things, ultimately comes together in the novel's representation of parallel mobilities; that is, the immobility of classed characters, both physically and economically, are spatially and narratively juxtaposed with the comparative upward mobility of migrants. If, as many critics believe, *Saturday* is to be considered an astute reflection of the sociopolitical state of England, then the stakes of such a comparison become evident in the subsequent public representation of the transit-based bombings later that year. The bombings occurred on the seventh of July 2005, scarcely twelve hours after London had celebrated winning the bid for the 2012 Olympic games; four bombs were detonated in the Underground and on one bus, killing 52 people and injuring 772 more (Rogers et al). Among the dead were the four bombers, later identified as part of a terrorist cell potentially linked to al-Qaeda (Taylor).

Many of the details of the attack appear to mirror a final passage in *Saturday*, published some months before the bombing. In the final pages of the novel, Perowne's

reflections on the events of his eventful day expand into anxious projections about the future of his city. Once again at his window, surveying the city, Perowne thinks:

London, his small part of it, lies wide open, impossible to defend, waiting for its bomb, like a hundred other cities. Rush hour will be a convenient time. It might resemble the Paddington crash — twisted rails, buckled, upraised commuter coaches, stretchers handed out through broken windows, the hospital's Emergency Plan in action (276).

The symmetry between Perowne's "prediction" and the subsequent actual attack on transit is something that McEwan himself remarks that "everyone was waiting for," especially after similar attacks such as the commuter train bombing that occurred in Madrid in 2004. What is more noteworthy to me about the novel's foreshadowing of July 7 is not its ability to portray the event itself, which would likely only propagate the kind of suspicious and xenophobic paranoia that Perowne himself cannot even fully commit to (likely because it would be at odds with his own conception of himself as an intelligent liberal humanist), but rather the repetition of Saturday's class politics in the bombing's political and media framing.

As I suggested early on in this chapter, July 7 was read by many as a result of Britain's increasing multiculturalism, its "soft touch" towards people, religions and cultures that are outside a white British imaginary, and its supposedly foolhardy commitment to equal rights over national security and defense.³⁵ The image of Britain as

³⁵ For example, one Daily Mail article from July 13 2005 attributed the attacks to "multicultural values" which have British officials "on eggshells"; Shadow home secretary for the Conservatives, David Davies,

beset by problematic others took on a specific class dimension in other political and media interpretations of the attack that demonstrates how the manner in which race and class are indirectly brought together through mobility in McEwan's *Saturday* can become an ideological framework on which political connections are built and deployed. While public transport rarely appears in *Saturday* — focusing as it does on bodily metaphors for working-class stagnancy, as well as the class-defining abilities of the private automobile—in the rhetoric of July 7 coverage, transit became not only symbolic of mobility but also a metaphor for working-class identity itself. The connection between class and transit was made especially clear in then-mayor of London Ken Livingstone's address shortly after the bombing:

I want to say one thing specifically to the world today. This was not a terrorist attack against the mighty and the powerful. It was not aimed at Presidents or Prime Ministers. It was aimed at ordinary, working-class Londoners [...] (7 July 2005).

Other responses to July 7 similarly focused upon the bombing as truly an attack on London's people, rather than figures of state or economic authority. In the words of one *Guardian* columnist, the 2005 bombings were "indiscriminate" and alarmingly difficult to interpret on a global scale of terrorism, because unlike the attack on the Twin Towers in

further condemned government policies that encourage "distinctive identities rather than promoting the common values of nationhood" as the culprit behind the attacks (qtd. in Jones). The term "soft touch" with regards to British immigration policy is also favoured among Tory politicians such as William Hague ("Foreign Land"). For a critique of the language of "soft touch," see Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004).

New York City—representative of capitalism and Western power and excess—July 7’s targeted “commuters are symbolic of nothing more than the drudgery of work” (Burke).

Public transit is coded as a signifier for society’s least powerful or privileged, who cannot, like the Henry Perownes of the world, escape to the individual bubbles of their private cars. Interestingly, Livingstone also evoked this synonymy between public transit commuting and the working classes in his July 7 speech, conflating “working-class Londoner” with “working Londoner.” Livingstone’s slippage brings up questions regarding the representation of the attack and its victims within preexisting politics of race, class, and British nationalism. Curiously, Livingstone’s use of the term “working-class” seems to be misaligned with the demographic of the victims themselves, which include lawyers, engineers, and design editors among other white collar and creative class occupations (“7/7 Bombings: Who Were the 52 Victims?”).³⁶ While I am not suggesting that Livingstone’s perception of public transport as an often highly contested and hard-won working-class space is disingenuous in any way, his desire to read the bombing as an explicit attack on the working class *despite* its very middle class and even potentially affluent victims is a powerful contribution to the rhetorical construction of July 7 as an attack by racialized others on the everyday working people of the city. The framing of July 7 victims as workers removed from the power and politics of the nation helps to shore up the image of a besieged nation as a whole, and not one implicated within and

³⁶ This is not to say that Livingstone’s highlighting of the classed nature of public transit users is necessarily part of a premeditated desire to support a nationalistic agenda; Livingstone’s referencing of the victims of public transport as “working class” despite the actual statistics that suggest otherwise is perhaps in keeping with the mayor’s political work. Well known for championing working-class rights and interests, public transport itself was one of “red Ken’s” primary focal points during his service as mayor, including the institution of an expanded bus route and half-price fare for those on income support (Rayner).

accountable for the histories of colonial violence that are likely to have precipitated the attack.

This depoliticized framing of Livingstone and others of Britain as a liberal nation under siege is also bolstered by the fact that many pundits in British media and politics represented July 7 as evidence of a larger problem of race and immigration. As I have quoted in the introduction to this chapter, July 7 was interpreted by many conservative and liberal commentators as the result of multiculturalist values replacing “British” values, and removing the nation’s position of authority by forcing it to walk on “eggshells,” as one journalist asserted (“Fundamental Challenges Ahead”). A racializing distinction is made between the two, with the implication that British values and multiculturalism are mutually exclusive: that is, British values are white values, and need to be preserved or re-invigorated in the face of multiculturalism. Moreover, multiculturalism is aligned with terrorism more generally, and in particular here, with violence against Britain’s most innocent and inconspicuous people, its “working class.” This xenophobic argument that arose from July 7 is of course a continuation of a longer racist movement that has deep roots in British history; although extending beyond the postwar era that this dissertation begins with, anxieties over civilizational ‘takeover’ increased in response to the postcolonial diasporic movement that emerged from the end of Empire in the 1950s. Its contemporary manifestations, as Sara Ahmed has pointed out, focus on Britain’s apparent “soft touch” or vulnerability towards immigration and its supposed demands on British resources over and above those that are made available to “native” white populations that are in need. As Ahmed argues, “the nation is made

vulnerable to abuse by its very openness to others [...] the demand is that the nation should seal itself from others, if it is to act on behalf of its citizens, rather than react to the claims of immigrants and other others” (2). Ahmed’s analysis of the inclusion of ‘other others’ is particularly important in the case of July 7, as the perpetrators themselves were, for the most part, British born (save for one young man, who had immigrated to Britain from Jamaica). That the bombers were not new to England but rather “home grown” further adds to the racism of July 7’s response: it is not enough to be a citizen, for to be non-white means to not truly belong.³⁷

And yet, immigration has played an important role in the city’s mobility. Public transit has a long history of migrant labour and colonial and postcolonial mobilities: after the Second World War, the British government recruited workers from the Caribbean to help fill the labour shortage caused by the War, many of whom were specifically recruited for work on public transit (Paul 119). As writer Sam Selvon details in his short story “Working on the Transport,” “you must be read in the papers about how London Transport send men down there in the West Indies to get fellars to work on the tube and bus” (132). Indeed, many of Selvon’s works of fiction feature characters who have been enlisted to leave Barbados or Trinidad to work on public transit.³⁸ This history was also showcased one year after the July 7’s bombings, in an event held by the London

³⁷ In *Out of Place* (1999), Ian Baucom locates the separation of place from identity as taking root in Enoch Powell’s “Rivers of Blood” Speech, which Baucom argues is indicative of the British Empire’s “collapse on itself” and the changing frontiers of national boundaries. With Thatcher’s 1981 Nationality Act, the racist privileging of ethnicity over place as a means of national identity became “the official narrative of England’s corporate and continuous selfhood” (24).

³⁸ Aside from “Working on the Transport,” other examples include “Eraser’s Dilemma” (1961) and *The Lonely Londoners* (1957).

Transport Museum that “celebrated the 50th anniversary of [London Transport’s] direct recruitment scheme in the Caribbean.” The Museum acknowledges that the recruitment was crucial because “[i]t became very difficult to fill the lower grade, poorly paid jobs, which could be dirty and difficult, and involved shift work and long hours,” an admission that ends on a bright note of a “journey” that features a “new life and job” (London Transport 2006). Thus the expansion of London Transport and the need to staff its vehicles and stations became the means by which many postcolonial migrants moved across the Atlantic to settle in the metropole. This diasporic movement not only facilitated the beginning of narratives of class mobility for many ex-colonial subjects, but also facilitated the mobility of the city itself, as London Transport needed colonial labour to function.

This history is important to consider in my argument against the causative links made between immigration and working-class stagnation, as it not only includes postcolonial immigrants within the history of the British working classes, but also suggests that the very same mobility that the media represents as threatened by dangerous immigrants was, in fact, built by immigrant labour. The internality of postwar migration to the operation of modern urban transport, and the diversity of socioeconomic class of July 7’s victims, brings to light the need to question how narratives of a threatened working-class mobility and white nationalism are woven into the disparate coordinates of a multicultural population and the London bombing. On the one hand, the invocation of an imagined “working-class” population as the primary victim in this attack works to depoliticize the bombing. Represented as a senseless attack on innocent British civilians, July 7 is

distanced from the Iraq War (among other imperialist ventures), at the same time that is represented as further justifying the British state's involvement in military efforts in the Middle East both past and present, and its ever-increasing and highly discriminatory security measures at home. The evasion of accountability and the establishment of British victimhood was made clear in the comparison between 9/11 and July 7, which seemed to suggest that the victims of the Twin Tower bombings were representative of wealth and power. In London, the victims of July 7 are framed as already-beleaguered workers, en route to the "drudgery of work" (Burke) in crowded public subway cars or buses.

Much like Perowne's perspective on Britain as being under threat of *civilizational* warfare by Islam, the portrayal of July 7 conjures a similar image. As then-PM Tony Blair asserted in one of his many press releases after the bombing, July 7 "was an attack on civilized nations everywhere"; the key terms "civilized" and "civilization" is importantly repeated several times (Blair, "International Television Network" 2005). The racial coordinates of "civilization," already compounded in the image of George W. Bush and Jacques Chirac standing directly behind Blair during his speech, are further signified in the classed representation of July 7 victims. As Ben Pitcher argues in his examination of contemporary multicultural politics, working-class Britons have been promoted as a "group within their own ethnic culture" who are not only assumed to represent a kind of authentic white Britishness, but are also conceived of as a threatened white "minority" in an increasingly diverse nation (9). By construing a racialized white working class as the primary target of the attack, liberal and conservative commentators' xenophobic responses to July 7 anchors the growing institutionalization of a white British nationalism

that requires defense from immigrants, refugees, and other potentially dangerous ‘strangers.’

Thus, the threat to mobility that underpins the response to the bombings is also resolutely a white mobility, not only in the sense of class mobility or the spatial mobility of commuting, but also in larger international and neoimperial senses as well: the freedom to expand globally, to circulate capital freely, the right to access the commodity of oil that fuels the movement of capitalism both physically and economically. The representation of July 7 by politicians and other commentators as an attack on working-class mobility did not give ground to an examination of the politics behind class mobility’s undeniable stagnation outside of the attack on London transit; instead, its fabrication in the context of the terrorist attacks merely shored up the political structuring of a superior white liberal nation and its inalienable right to be mobile. What remains a spectre within the class-implicated construction of July 7 is the continued prosperity of an economic system built upon labour exploitation, mass poverty, racism, and the decline of social services needed by a growing majority. Alongside the articles on the July 7 bombings that I have quoted above from daily British newspapers are articles that describe the rising unemployment rates and stagnancy of annual wage earnings for British citizens, the increasing housing crisis for those reliant on social services, and widening gaps in access to healthcare and education.³⁹ While the realities of poverty, joblessness and public funding cuts date back to the implementation of Thatcher’s neoliberal economic and social organization in the late 1970s, their gravity has only increased in the twenty-first century. As Stuart Hall

³⁹ For example, “Jobless Rises Matches 90s Slump,” *Daily Mail* 13 July 2005;

writes in his examination of a neoliberal narrative from Thatcher onwards, the “avalanche began immediately and has not let up” (2011).⁴⁰

It is not coincidental, then, that this contextualization of July 7 within a narrative of working-class vulnerability comes at a time of increasing unemployment, the rising cost of housing, lower annual wage earnings, increasingly aggressive benefits policing and skyrocketing debt in the UK (as is the case elsewhere). Rather than looking to Blair’s decision to enter the Iraq War in 2003, or, in the case of a working-class crisis, to examine the persistence of poverty as bound up in unequal distribution of wealth and labour exploitation, these distant elements are brought together in a narrative of competing mobilities: the movement of others across the nation’s borders target and disrupt the movement of everyday British people by attacking their means to get to work, and thus their means to ascend the class ladder.⁴¹ The responses to July 7 therefore echo the ideological framework I identify in *Saturday*, whereby the presence of racialized others is equated with the social and economic stagnation of a British working or underclass. The framing of July 7 demonstrates the manner in which the ideological coordinates of race, class, and mobility that structure Perowne’s observations on the twenty-first century city in which he lives are mobilized for narratives of white

⁴⁰ See also George Monbiot’s article in *The Guardian* “Neoliberalism: the Root of all Our Problems” (15 April 2016).

⁴¹ It is important to mention that alignment between July 7 and the Iraq War has emerged in recent retrospectives. Most infamously, this correlation was made public in Ken Livingstone’s public blaming of Blair for the terrorist attack (*BBC* 2015); the UK government also released the report on its inquiry into Blair’s involvement with the War in July 2016, led by Sir John Chilcot. Among other criticisms of Blair, Chilcot states that “the UK chose to join the invasion of Iraq before peaceful options had been exhausted” and with the underestimation of the consequences of invasion (2016). Of course, in the immediate aftermath of the bombing in 2005, these criticisms were not formally made or publicized.

nationalism and the displacing of economic crises onto the exceptional mobilities of migrants and “other others.”

As I conclude this chapter and move on to explore other historical representations of the white desire for social mobility, I wonder how the contextualization of classed representations of July 7 within an already existing economic crisis is suggestive of a gap in the correlation between spatial mobility and social mobility that makes the need to rethink this equation urgent. While Perowne’s ease of movement, and his unease over the way he feels it has become pressured by the physical and ideological presence of others, is strongly correlated with his affluence and status in *Saturday*, it also problematically becomes the lens through which he views mobility among diverse populations and the problem of class difference. That is, the value-laden concept of mobility becomes a vehicle by which race and class are frequently read as in conflict or competition, without consideration of the complexities of “mobility” itself. As Avtar Brah notes in *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996), “the question is not simply *who travels*, but *when, how, and under what circumstances?* What socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions mark the trajectories of these journeys?” (182). Brah goes on indicate that mobility — here in the form of diaspora — is shaped by differing forms of power, and to understand the circumstances of travel one must also approach the structures and systems that produce them. This need is made visible in *Saturday*: by viewing relationships of race and class through the perspective of Perowne’s own affluence, and its connection to mobility as its material evidence, “mobile” migrants are ascribed the attributes of aspiration and economic success without regard for the ongoing racism that pervades

Britain in the form of poverty, violence, and neoimperialist exploits such as the Iraq War. This concept of threatening migrant mobilities that became particularly volatile during July 7 also obscures the fact that an “attack” on the mobilities of London’s “workers” — and not only those performing lower wage jobs — in the form of job loss, service cuts and wage gaps long predates July 7. As I will demonstrate in the next two chapters, this longer history of class “immobility” is traceable to, at least in this project, the postwar era. Importantly, the labour towards the good life for the white subjects that I analyze in Chapter Two and Chapter Three often share a fate similar to that of *Saturday’s* Baxter; that is, they end in disaster or despair rather than the achievement of social mobility. However, rather functioning as spectral terrorists or highly mobile competitors for the good life, multicultural subjects are important and largely unrecognized figures of emotional care and cosmopolitan signification in stories of white aspiration. In what follows, a genealogy of “cruelly optimistic” class aspiration, and its coordinates of racialized labour and white exclusivity, will be traced and developed from the postwar era onwards in order to counter the narrative of immigrant-caused social crisis that July 7 precipitated for conservative and liberal critics alike.

Chapter Two:

In the Background of Social Change: Race, Upward Mobility, and Domestic Labour in Postwar Literature and Film

In a 1956 handbook for tenants of an East London council estate, one section begins by querying: “have you ever seriously thought of your front door and what it symbolizes?” (Dagenham Borough Council). What the front door symbolizes — perhaps class aspirations, or the performance of normative gender roles, or of the racial background of its occupants — and what it *is* — the front door to a council home or flat, with its suggestions of modest means, social services, the aid of the welfare state — is a distinction that is blurred by the labour of those who live behind the front door. What the intended reader of this handbook (likely a woman, as it is women who are tasked with the care of the home) is being asked to do is to consider how individual front doors are in fact the frontier of self-making. Implied in this loaded question is the belief that respectability is wrought through the cultural capital of hygienic domestic practices and good aesthetic taste for not just the middle and upper classes who can afford their own homes, but those who can’t as well. And who is the invisible judge in this question, the entity that reads and evaluates the symbolic front door — other tenants, passers-by, the council, the state, or all of the above? This question is moreover temporally significant, as it is posed at a moment when the hardship and social stasis of previous decades for the working class was purportedly giving way to a period of optimism for a “classless” and “affluent” society that included all socioeconomic categories in its consumerist and lifestyle-driven

culture. Attending to the symbolism of the front door might suggest that aesthetic taste and artful home-making have become a “classless” preoccupation alongside what is assumed to be the new universality of access to the good life; yet what is hidden behind the new aesthetics of the working-class front door is the labour that goes into making the front door presentable, and the raced hierarchies and divisions that are contained within its symbolism.

This chapter explores feminized labour in literary and cinematic representations of the postwar working-class home as an investment in an upward mobility that builds a performance of whiteness. In the postwar literary and sociological texts that I examine, upward mobility and performances of whiteness are bound together in the labour of modernity, respectability, and normative modes of living and lifestyle. Here I utilize an expansive definition of labour that draws upon a specific genealogy of feminist critique that interrogates the division between labour and work along lines of gender and activity (such as the distinction between factory work versus care work maintained under capitalism). Hannah Arendt (1958) distinguishes labour from work as that which “ensures not only individual survival, but the life of the species” (8). However, as Kathi Weeks observes, this Arendtian equation positions labour as the “activity that produces biological life” and work as the “creation of the object world” (14). Weeks argues that a similar division is maintained by traditional Marxists, who venerate labour as “a collective and creative human capacity” that can be unyoked from capitalism, which harnesses labour to produce surplus value (14-15). By contrast, a “refusal to distinguish between work and labour” allows for a more expansive critique of labour under

capitalism (15). Indeed, as the Italian feminists of the 1970s argued, “the working day for capital does not necessarily produce a pay-check and does not begin and end at the factory gates” (Federici and Cox 4). According to these feminist theorists, the home was a “social factory” of reproduction and care that supplied capital with its work force.

Drawing on the work of Federici and others, as well as her own critique of Arendt and Marxist theory, Weeks argues that both “work” and “labour” “produce not just economic goods and services but also social and political subjects” (8), and are both also haunted by the same “productivist values” that instil hierarchies and divisions under capitalism (15). In agreement with Weeks, I also utilize “work” and “labour” interchangeably, particularly as this chapter concerns itself with the gendered work in the home and the social subjectivities that are produced by these labours.

In addition to this important analysis of the gendered labour of the home and its incorporation into capitalism, I include “emotional labour” in my understanding of “work” in this chapter. Like domestic labour, emotional labour is at once feminized and removed from considerations of capitalist production. Yet, as Arlie Hochschild has revealed in her research on affect in the workplace, appropriate affect is often a crucial part of the service being offered, and can be just as —if not more — exhausting than the physical demands placed on the (often female) worker (Hochschild 4). In sum, this chapter views labour under capitalism as a physical, mental, and emotional effort that produces social and political subjects in addition to objects, services, and new generations of labourers. This inclusion of subjectivity as a product of labour is particularly salient to my argument, as I expand on the conceptualizations of work laid out by Weeks, Federici,

and Hochschild in what follows to include race as well as class into its divisions and aspirations.

With this definition of labour in mind, I look at depictions of socially aspirational women within cultural and scholarly representations of working-class life in the 1950s and 1960s with the aim of foregrounding the gendered space of the home as a gendered site of labour towards upward mobility. My examples, which encompass Carolyn Steedman's semi-autobiographical *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1987), Ted Willis's play *Hot Summer Night* (1957) and its screen adaptation *Flame in the Streets* (1961), and sociological and political writing from the mid-century complicate and even contradict this desire for (and work towards) the good life in the postwar era by revealing the exhaustion, conflict, and tenuous rewards (if any) produced by class mobility's labours. At the same time, these texts also demonstrate the ways in which aspirational labour in the working-class home reinforces its gender-normativity and oppressiveness while simultaneously fortifying the boundaries of white economic and social privilege. Through my analyses of these cultural texts, I argue that the aspirational working-class home articulates a class-race continuum; its female labourers are drawn socially into a contract that equates the boundaries of the upwardly mobile home with the demands of white ascendancy.

This chapter focuses on the intersection between a new culture of working-class affluence with postcolonial migration, which I described in detail in my introductory chapter. What is striking about both of these key changes in the postwar era is the centrality of the *home* in the debates that they have elicited, both in their contemporary

mid-century moment and in the present day of the twenty-first century. For example, the privatized domicile figures strongly in Stuart Hall's 1958 examination of the dissolution of working-class life and political consciousness that many leftists argue was the result of the postwar boom in consumerism and middle-class aspiration. Although Hall ultimately states that class distinction still exists beneath the veneer of universalized commercialism, he argues that new working-class investments in

‘Homemaking’ and ‘gardening’ are not community skills, but subtle modes of status differentiation and striving, a new kind of individualism which enters the working class lives, so to speak, ‘with the new furniture, *Woman’s Realm* and *The Practical Householder*.’ (30)

In Hall's description, women and the home are at the center of this perceived shift in mid-century working-class life. The working-class home as a feminized space in and of itself is not necessarily a new phenomenon. As many scholars have demonstrated, the nostalgic tropes of working-class women as “our mam” and as performing “domestic work in the private sphere, including maternity, rather than paid work in the public sphere was seen as the normative state of working class femininity” previous to the Second World War (Brooke, *Gender* 776). However, Hall's main observation is not just that the home is a gendered space — he implies this in invoking the magazine *Women’s Realm* — but most importantly that it is a gendered space of individualistic competition and middle-class aspiration that has recruited working-class women into its culture of home aesthetics. The tendency to focus on women as being at the helm of changes in consumer desires lead to their common representation as agents in the break-up of working-class ways of life,

particularly for those who look back on pre-privatized working-class life as one of community solidarity, anti-materialism and politicized responses to inequality. The material and the individual, rather than the productive and the social, almost always feature in stereotypes of working-class women's desire for the good life: nice clothes, nice belongings, a nice house.

Contemporary scholarship on the postwar era in Britain also locates economic and social shifts in working-class life in relation to changes in domestic space. Selina Todd describes the “familiar frame for historians of post-war Britain” as “the migration of the working class from poverty-stricken inner cities to more affluent suburbs where domestic privacy replaced older, communal forms of leisure” (502). Likewise, Claire Langhamer's investigation of the working-class home in the “age of affluence” makes note of the new era of working-class participation in previously bourgeois realms of home shows and interior decoration, evidenced by the popularity among the lower classes of the “Britain Can Make It” exhibition and the pronouncement that despite the fact that “people (notably housewives) are very long-suffering as far as their housing conditions are concerned [...] [a]t the same time, they are quite capable of envisaging the sort of home they like” (Mass Observation panel qtd in Langhamer 346). This gap between women's ability to *imagine* a beautiful and modern home and the material conditions in which they live supports the argument that the home is a powerful and perhaps new divider between having and not-having for the less privileged classes at the same time that it nuances characterizations of the working-class home as affluent by highlighting *desire* and not simply attainment. Additionally, Lydia Martens and Emma Casey's examination of

postwar gender and consumption call it a period of “domestic dreaming,” a phrase that emphasizes not only the locus of dreams of the good life within the parameters of the home, but also the difference — and frequently, the *distance* — between a dream and its actualization.

What remains a constant in both past and present descriptions of the mid-century home is the portrayal of women as desiring bodies for class change. In this chapter, I look more closely at the home-oriented desires of white working-class women in narratives of class aspiration in order to surface the *labour* that “domestic dreaming” required. The memory of working-class women as consumers who contributed to the dissolution of working-class communalism and public life neglects a theorization of the home as unacknowledged site of production as well as of women’s oppression. In “Wages Against Housework” (1975), Sylvia Federici argues that for working-class men, wage-labour means that

you work, not because you like it, or because it comes naturally to you, but because it is the only condition under which you are allowed to live. But exploited as you might be, *you are not that work* [...] [b]ut in the case of housework the situation is qualitatively different. The difference lies in the fact that not only has housework been imposed on women, but it has been transformed into a natural attribute of our female physique and personality, an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character. (2)

Of course, it can be easily argued that work very much becomes intrinsic to the identities of working-class men; this fusion is, for example, readable in George Orwell’s

observations of miners in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), whose lives and even bodies are depicted by Orwell as shaped by the long hours and strenuous work of mining (20). A key difference between gendered forms of working-class labour is, however, its spatial divisions. Men may leave the workplace, but women's work — the labour of reproduction and care — is reinforced by women's relegation to the home. As Federici states, domestic labour has been made synonymous with the feminized body; women are not only symbolized by their homes, but their work is who they are. Thus, women are subjugated beyond the traditional framework of working-class exploitation under capitalism, as the naturalization of their forced work means that they are neither compensated nor recognized for what they do.

Importantly, the home is not only synonymous with women and their labour but is also a common metaphor for the nation. This metaphor became particularly salient during the independence of various British colonies and the concomitant migrations of postcolonial citizens to the metropole — many of whom were recruited for work, not only on public transit as I noted in Chapter One, but for domestic work as well.⁴² As Wendy Webster points out, “[t]he opposition between British/white and ‘immigrant’/black drew particularly on domesticated versions of national identity” where the postwar home, increasingly conceived of as *classless*, “was reworked into a distinction between a common Englishness of well-kept homes and families in opposition to ‘blacks next door’” (xiii). This image of the “classless” white postwar home that Webster describes is

⁴² Postcolonial migrants' work in the home surfaces again in Chapter Three in my discussion of Beryl Gilroy's autobiography *Black Teacher*. Unable to find employment in her trained profession of teaching, Gilroy becomes a domestic servant for a wealthy imperialist, Lady Anne.

one that this chapter reads more closely. What is missing from descriptions of working-class embourgeoisement by writers such as Hall, Todd, Langhamer (and etc.) is not only the hidden labour towards a better life that is embedded in stories of working-class social change, but also class mobility's necessary criteria of performing a white identity befitting the new lifestyles of the aspirational working class. Although race is certainly named as part of the changes in working-class neighbourhoods in many scholars' work on the economic and cultural shifts in the postwar era, the "women's realm" of the aspirational home is described in terms of class desire, while the racializing of that desire is left untouched. Race, much like domestic work itself, is often a submerged thread in narratives of women's labour towards the good life, even those that are determined to subvert the traditional stories of working-class life and its existing stereotypes.

One example that I draw upon in my examination of submerged narratives of race in white working-class women's aspiration for upward mobility is Carolyn Steedman's *Landscape for a Good Woman*. Here Steedman challenges the nostalgic memory of a "golden age" or simpler time of working-class communalism and anti-materialism through the story of her mother's upper-class envy and her longing for a "New Look skirt, a timbered country cottage, to marry a prince" (9). Although Steedman details the need to present views that oppose tales of working-class "psychological simplicity" as well as working-class access to postwar affluence (indeed, her mother remained wanting, both in terms of her poverty and her desire for the trappings of a better life), the influence of the home on her mother's desire for the good life and the manner in which her desire textures her interactions with migrant others is not theorized in the text despite its undeniable

presence. What my closer reading uncovers is that narratives of white working-class desire for social mobility stage encounters with the racialized other as part of a process of “becoming white,” however marginalized these encounters may be in representations of working-class life. Importantly, these negotiations do not simply follow the discriminatory mentality of dividing the white home from the black home as the working classes attempt to eke their way up the socioeconomic ladder. Interestingly, in the final part of the chapter, the texts I examine — the play *Hot Summer Night* and its film adaptation *Flame in the Streets* — portray access to class mobility as predicated on the ability to perform tolerance to newcomers to Britain. In Steedman’s autobiography, class mobility is *attempted* through the accommodation of others, but not *achieved*. Later in the chapter, I hypothesize that this is perhaps due to a failure on Steedman’s mother’s part to adhere to the restrictive nuances of accommodation: that is, one must accommodate in the sense of tolerance, but not in the sense of shared accommodations. As I will delineate in this final analysis, the performance of cosmopolitanism is part of the labour towards desired class uplift, a labour that moreover becomes feminized in the class-constructing — not “classless” — space of the home.

If the appearance of the home is one criteria for evaluating the social status of its presumed female resident, another socially weighted criteria for women’s class aspiration in the texts I analyze is their proximity to bodies of colour. As I will show, desires for material and social uplift produce economizing relationships with postcolonial migrants, where white women’s tolerance and cosmopolitan attitudes are abbreviated by their imperative to maintain appropriate distance from the racialized subject of their tolerance.

In the context of an imperialist and racist Britain — even “after” colonialism — intimacy with racial others endangers the performance of whiteness. Drawing from Sara Ahmed’s discussion of the “stickiness” of signs as the basis of signification, racialized otherness threatens to “stick” to white subjects, and therefore signify them as not fully white. Thus, as Ahmed points out, signification — how objects are “stuck” together — become important in an understanding of social abjection and exclusion (*Cultural Politics* 93).

In order to accrue the cultural capital that is represented as part and parcel of an economically comfortable and socially respected good life, the white working-class female figures — both fictional and characterized through narrative memory — that I focus on perform a dual labour of cosmopolitanism and racial boundary-making. In my examination of domestic work toward the good life in *Hot Summer Night* and *Flame in the Street*, I shed light on the way in which struggles for racial tolerance and equality in these so-called “race problem” dramas also become subordinated to the more powerful plotlines of material uplift. A culture of affluence and the narratives of individualized and material gain that it produces, while in some ways encouraging both freedom from racial prejudice and freedom from working-class women’s existence in drudgery and decrepitude, ultimately fail to provide emancipation from societal constraints and prejudices for both the racialized and gendered figures I analyze.

“Backgrounding” Race and Gender

The aspirational working-class home is a feminine domain that has been backgrounded in both fiction and non-fiction of the postwar era — even in feminist texts

that seek to illuminate the hidden struggles of working-class women. I borrow this concept of “backgrounding” from Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology*, where she describes the “background” of masculine labour as “that which must take place in order for something to appear” or to allow “what is ‘in’ the foreground to acquire the shape it does (38). The *that* in Ahmed’s example is the obscured feminized labour of domestic upkeep and child-rearing that the male writer (in Ahmed’s analysis, Husserl) may turn his back to as he focuses upon his writing. Thus, to be “backgrounded” is to be obscured, outside of focus, but nonetheless integral to what has been produced: the comfortable home, the male writer’s finished work. Following this attention to buried narratives of women’s work, this section argues against the characterization of domestic materialism and embourgeoisement as the chosen (or even “natural”) agenda of working-class women, considering instead the social and even legal ways in which women were bound to the home. As I have shown above with the example of Hall, such characterizations not only depoliticize working-class women, but also diminish the fact that women had limited means by which they could make positive changes in their lives. For many women, the desire to leave behind the hardships of working-class life involved the continuation of their work in the private sphere of the home, since those public spaces that could offer both social and personal improvement for the working classes (namely, education, work, and politics) were still very much masculinized, as I will discuss shortly.

The consensus of much historical and sociological scholarship is that working-class citizens had greater access to wealth in the postwar era. However, the means of achieving this higher standard of living is rarely mentioned. For working-class subjects who desired

upward mobility, the *labour* towards the material trappings of a successful life was not necessarily the same as it was for those already established within higher socioeconomic brackets. In John Goldthorpe's 1963 examination of the "embourgeoisement" of the British working class in the '50s and '60s, he argues that although the working classes have, over the postwar years, achieved comparable wages to white-collar workers, the "strain and deprivation" experienced in their labour towards these monetary gains were not shared by their white-collar counterparts (17). The "strain and deprivation" that Goldthorpe describes, while importantly attenuating the optimistic image of class mobility in the postwar era, still says little about the gendered differences of this hardship in the effort to produce a life deemed *good* — comfortably furnished, modern and hygienic, and free from the value judgments made by governmental measurements of poverty and criminality.⁴³ Moreover, the use of wages, which are earned outside of the home and in the workplace, does not capture all the means and ends by which class mobility is measured, particularly, as I will show, for women of the working classes.

In Carolyn Steedman's memoir of her working-class postwar childhood *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1976), she vividly details the privation her family suffered for her mother's dreams of class uplift. As Steedman points out, her mother's desires for the good life and the labour that such an optimistic goal manifests is gendered in particular ways:

⁴³ In Gillian Swanson's *Drunk With the Glitter* (2007), she describes the assessment of domestic space in the postwar era by women's groups (and other concerned parties) as a means of explaining the behaviour of delinquent youth, particularly girls. The modern home, with its "restraint and discipline" and "regime of aesthetic order" was contrasted with the "regressive" and "cluttered" home. The latter was not only read as evidence of an "underdeveloped mind," but was also connected to the development of "the unstable adolescent girl who had no interest in work and was [...] involved in sexual adventure or petty crime" (38).

[f]rom a Lancashire mill town and a working-class twenties childhood she came away wanting: fine clothes, glamour, money; to be what she wasn't. However that longing was produced in her distant childhood, what she actually wanted were real things, real entities, things she materially lacked, things that a culture and a social system withheld from her. (6)

Furthermore, Steedman's mother works towards these feminized signifiers of class — stylish clothing, a nice home, a certain form of social recognition and even reverence — through specifically feminized standards of propriety and “classiness.” Steedman recounts her mother's obsession with cleanliness, fashion, and dieting, including “eating brown bread,” “not drinking” (1), eating meals of shredded vegetables (41) and refusing to buy white sugar (58).

Alongside these aesthetic and bodily regimens, Steedman also views the reproductive labour of bearing and raising children as the work of class desire:

My mother's decision (reconstructed from circumstantial evidence) to produce children as levers, as possibilities, must have been made with the knowledge of herself as both bargain and bargainer [...] a baby, a part of herself split off and made manifest, would not only ensure a future but would also *be* a future. (69-70)

Steedman's observations on the power of seemingly non-economic practices and objects resonate with Pierre Bourdieu's expansion of these concepts in his essay “Forms of Capital.” In theorizing more “invisible” forms of capital accumulation, Bourdieu includes other social and cultural factors in the production of social status, such as education, cultural taste, social networks, and embodied traits or habits. Bourdieu argues that “[i]t is

in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory” (46). Most forms of cultural capital are “linked to the body and presuppose embodiment”; in the efforts to inhabit the corporeal traits of a desirable class, Bourdieu writes

the work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost [...] an investment, above all, of time, but also that socially constituted form of libido, *libido sciendi*, with all the privation, renunciation, and sacrifice that it may entail. (48)⁴⁴

Tragically, all of these laborious practices of self-care, child-rearing, and material renunciation do not seem to change the realities of the Steedman family’s working-class life; as Steedman states on the first page of her memoir: “she’d been good; it hadn’t worked” (1). Yet, the mother sustains concepts of her own goodness because her desires and daily bodily practices are tethered to “regimes of normative ideology that link intimate desires to political realms of social membership and self-development to the assimilation of bourgeois norms” (Berlant 240), or what Steedman herself describes as the project of selfhood “that has been made by and through the testimony of people in a central relationship to the dominant culture, that is to say by and through people who are not working class” (11). Growing up in the hardships of the textile industry before the Second World War, the mother’s structure of desire in the era of “New Look” clothing

⁴⁴ For a contemporary, feminist use of Bourdieu’s theories of class, taste, and the body, see Angela McRobbie’s chapter “‘What Not to Wear’ and Post-Feminist Symbolic Violence” in *The Aftermath of Feminism* (2008).

and other valuable commodities of the 1940s and 50s was not just to be comfortable, but “classy”; and not only respectably working class, but part of a world of material luxuries and elegant femininity that was far from mill towns and hard work, a world that was moreover part of the optimistic culture of postwar Britain declared by politicians, economists and other pundits of the time (as they would continue to do so in subsequent decades).⁴⁵

In *Landscape*, clothing is identified as the particular object of the mother’s longing for an upper-class (or at least more glamorous) life. Steedman argues that clothing gains a particular charge as an object not only of respectability or personal worth for working-class women, but also as a transformative object that can allow one to obscure or momentarily exist outside of economic shame or inferiority. As Steedman points out, it is important in any examination of gender and class, at least in her white, British context, to pay attention to the “material stepping stones of [working-class] escape: clothes, shoes, makeup” (16). Yet, what seems to get less emphasis in *Landscape* as a gendered “stepping stone” in the desire for class mobility is the home, despite its prominence within historical narratives of working class mobility and consumption. In *Landscape*, Steedman does consider the gendered attachment to “home” for working-class subjects of the mid-century, as when she points out that, while stories of male working-class postwar experience are often tales of “running away” and climbing class ladders while grappling with their changing political and economic affiliations, working-class women were

⁴⁵ For example, at a 1957 Conservative rally, then-Prime Minister Harold Macmillan famously declared that in the postwar economic boom, “most people have never had it so good” (Brooke 105).

granted far less access to the outside world of social ascendancy. For example, critiquing Jeremy Seabrook's reflection on his college years in *Working-Class Childhood*, Steedman writes that Seabrook,

some eight years older than me and at Cambridge in the late fifties, sat with his fellow travellers from working-class backgrounds "telling each other escape stories in which we were all picaresque heroes of our own lives." But at the University of Sussex in 1965, there were no other women to talk to like this. (15)

In this quotation, Seabrook's memory of "escape" from working-class life is contrasted with Steedman's own recollection of her experience of the university. This comparison generates a gendered difference within the cultivated working-class memory of university life and its significance in terms of social mobility.⁴⁶ If, for working-class men of the 1950s, the "stepping stones" of social uplift manifested themselves in spaces such as the university — spaces beyond the "endless streets of little [working-class] houses" (7) — the under-representation of women in the dormitories and hallways of universities (except as cooks and housekeepers) even eight years after Seabrook's time at Cambridge points out women's exclusion from these common spaces of class uplift and individualized "escape" — likely in part as a consequence of the expectation that women remain in the home as caregivers.

While Steedman demonstrates working-class masculinity's greater opportunity for leaving the home, I would like to delve more deeply into the relationship between the

⁴⁶ C.f. Valerie Walkerdine's "Dreams from an Ordinary Childhood" for another perspective on working-class experience of higher education and the pressures to disaffiliate from one's origins.

mother's physical and emotional work towards the good life and her little house on Streatham Hill. This home is arguably the context for nearly all of Steedman's descriptions of her mother's efforts toward a life lived better, and what Steedman interprets as their failure. The home both encompasses the mother's lifelong struggle for class mobility and reflects her class standing to the outside world as a source of shame. On the very first page of the book, Steedman describes her mother's death in the kitchen of her childhood home, where she had moved "everything":

a single bed, the television, and the calor-gas heater [...] [u]pstairs, a long time ago, she had cried, standing on the bare floorboards in the front bedroom just after we moved to this house in Streatham Hill in 1951, my baby-sister in her carry cot. We both watched the dumpy retreating figure of the health visitor through the curtainless windows. The woman had said: 'this house isn't fit for a baby.' (1-2)

In this passage, the home structures the memory of class-based shame: the upstairs room, which carries the recollection of harsh judgments of feminine inadequacy, foretells the mother's still-impooverished death in the downstairs room, as if the pronouncement of an unfit home by the health visitor reflects the mother's inability to achieve class uplift. Indeed, the sparseness of the room in which the mother dies reflects the mother's failure to achieve the status of bourgeois femininity that she so desired, a status that home décor and domestic comforts were sanctioned to convey (and are clearly absent here). Thus, contrary to the story of the postwar home as the centerpiece for working-class affluence and modern lifestyles, the home in Steedman's memory represents the limitations on working-class women's lives; her mother both lives and dies within a space that has, from

the outset of *Landscape*, revealed to external appraisers of class like the government social worker the reality of her status, despite the mother's lifelong efforts to the contrary.

Steedman's "bare" and "curtainless" (2) memory of domestic inferiority and the invasive judgment of the state are reflective of the home as inextricable from working-class women's desires for upward mobility in the postwar era. I read the home as at once a site of strain and deprivation (Goldthorpe 17) and class-making aesthetic and material evaluation. Much as it was a focus in both popular and scholarly characterizations of increasing working-class embourgeoisement, the home in particular was also a litmus test for either the social viability or proclaimed degeneracy of working-class women in the welfare state's practice of assessment and surveillance. Although the new welfare state under the National Assistance Act of 1948 was to provide support for the working classes, its practice of sending social workers and welfare officials into the homes of the working classes became a clear extension of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century governmental regimes of surveillance, uneven distribution of welfare, and personalized shame.⁴⁷ As Seth Koven argues, the notably feminized role of the government social worker "provided employment opportunities for educated middle-class white women who tended to impose their own class and ethnic values on their clients"; as investigators for National Assistance and mother's pension agencies, these middle-class social workers often "disproportionately excluded divorced, deserted and [migrant] women, regardless of their marital status" (165). Thus although the National Assistance Act was supposed to be an expansion of the British government's social responsibilities and promised to de-

⁴⁷ For more on this topic, see Seth Koven and Sonya Michel's *Mothers of a New World* (1993).

stigmatize financial assistance (in contrast to the previous stigmatization of the poor law system), these purported changes remained “at odds with the institutionalized belief that the state should not take up responsibilities that ought to remain in families” (Noble 344).

Working-class women were thus often caught between the imperative to stay and work within the private sphere of the home — something that middle and upper class women could afford to do — and the reality that social uplift also required earning wages outside the home. For women of the emergent middle class in the nineteenth century, the inception of the patriarchal family meant that “[h]ousehold management lost its public character. It no longer concerned society. It became a *private service*; the wife became the head servant, excluded from all participation in social production” (Engels 104). In the mid-twentieth century women of *all* classes were discouraged from entering the workforce by a “rapidly changing maternal practice of the mid-1950s” that was “influenced by popularized versions of Bowlby and broadcast Winnicott” (Steedman 118). John Bowlby in particular was a psychologist of the mid-century who stressed that “children who were deprived of maternal attention posed a grave threat to the civic body, displaying negative social behaviours such as stealing, delinquency, violence and sexual misdemeanors” (Bailkin 180).⁴⁸ In Bailkin’s critique of postwar Bowlbyism, she observes how these theories of proper parenting and child development were often used to pathologize migrant children, whose cultural practices were at odds with “the Bowlbyist gospel of maternal care” (180). Similarly — albeit in a framework of class — Steedman

⁴⁸ Donald Winnicott was also a developmental psychologist of the 1950s and 1960s who was influential in debates around women working outside of the home (among other aspects of child-raising and maternity).

notes that these new maternal practices often imposed classist judgment and reified social divisions, as a working-class child “felt a resentment toward a working mother who behaved less and less like the increasing number of ‘new’ mothers around her” (118).

Conversely, working-class women were also discouraged from relying on National Assistance in order to remain *within* the home. In the effort to dissuade women from using welfare benefits, the state did everything in its power — from humiliating to spying and imprisoning — to reinforce their dependence on individual men.⁴⁹ This dependence was not only maintained by the National Assistance Board’s register of domestic labour as income, whereby it was assumed that, regardless of whether or not this shared dwelling had any romantic or familial context, if a woman was living in a home with or had children with a male wage-earner, her “wage” was lodging and food. Need was also assessed in much the same manner as it was under the pre-existing poor law, whereby an officer of the state would visit the home and make an assessment; need was then based upon the *household*, not the individual. In situations similar to that of Steedman’s mother, where the father of a woman’s children was living outside the home or separated from the family, household need would still include the husband, ex-husband, or even common-law partner’s income. Thus, women who were estranged from their husbands were still forced to depend on them through the confining legal umbrella of the home.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ See National Assistance Act 1948, Section 51

⁵⁰ The following clause “where a husband and wife are members of the same household no assistance grant shall be made to meet the requirements of the wife for any period during which the husband is so engaged” (9.1) was often subject to the interpretation of a council.

The inseparability of the individual woman and her home — and thus the assumed “head” of the home, whatever man happened to be living in it — in legal and economic calculations is also present in postwar work on class mobility by John Goldthorpe from the 1960s. When later challenged by feminist sociologists Joan Acker and Christine Delphy in the 1970s on his work’s erasure of women in theories of embourgeoisement and class ascendancy, he states that dealing with the class status of women is a “vexed question” of

whether the individual [woman] should still be taken as a unit of analysis, or whether this should become the family or household; or, in other words, of whether the class (or status) position of women should be seen as being ‘derived’ from that of their family ‘head’ — and thus typically from that of a male — rather than being established by reference to their own, individual attributes. (532)

Goldthorpe answers this question by saying that although there are a “minority” of cases where a woman is a “head,” ultimately “in the context of class analysis, it is the location of the family member who has the fullest commitment to participation in the labour market that is [...] seen as the most reliable indicator of the location of the family as a whole” (535). Thus, by virtue of this complex legal yoking of femininity with both the public interests of the nation and a dependency on privatized, non-waged forms of sustenance (i.e. through the labour of sex and housework, a dependency forged through *individual* sexual relationships rather than provisions from the state), working-class women’s desire for social viability cannot be analyzed without consideration of the home. To paraphrase Goldthorpe, women *become* the household in the postwar scene of

optimism for the good life.

However, as the Steedman house in Streatham Hill exemplifies, if the home and not “individual attributes” are what make feminine class status, then the labour of social optimism for women is exerted outside of the modes of productivity that typically garner material uplift — i.e., the kind of labour that happens *outside* the home, like in the factory, office, or the university. This is not to say that women were completely absent from the workforce in postwar England; the relative growth of the economy from pre- and inter-war years, coupled with the growth of the welfare state and labour shortages, opened up many positions in wage work deemed fitting for women, such as social work, healthcare, and teaching. Postwar women were nonetheless expected to leave many of the positions they had come to fill and enjoy during the Second World War, as it was the expectation that ex-servicemen (who were still able to work) would come home to full employment. Laws such as the “marriage ban,” which decreed that women must leave their employment upon marriage, also made it difficult for women to maintain their financial independence, especially if the men they were legally attached to were not able or willing to provide support. In terms of education, women’s presence in the university, as Steedman attests, was still disproportionate to the entrance levels of male students. The Robbins Report, a document produced by the Committee on Higher Education in 1963, determined that only about one percent of girls leaving high school were enrolled in higher education (Spencer 6). The space of the home is thus one of the few (if not the only) spaces through which a woman is publicly evaluated and granted social inclusion (and exclusion). This confinement of women’s aspiration for class mobility to the home

thus provides clear obstacles for women's ability to maintain financial independence and personal economic uplift.

What the above arguments, when taken together, demonstrate is that women's exclusion from "productive" labour markets and other public spaces of social mobility limits their ability to be producers of their own material and social ascendancy; however, women are nonetheless evaluated as classed subjects in an era of shifting class boundaries and optimism for mobility, albeit in domains outside of traditional spaces of class differentiation and mobility. Women's status is made legible legally and socially through the home and all of its consumer trappings, even if the labours within it are rendered invisible and outside of what Goldthorpe calls the "labour market." Thus, in the case of *Landscape*, Steedman is unable to share the masculine memory of being a "picaresque hero" of working-class escape into a life of status and opportunity, because, as Steedman and her mother's story demonstrates, women's social uplift was dependent on the home as an increasingly significant marker of working-class respectability, a fact that materially and socially tied them to men — or, in the absence of wage-earning men, to poverty. Women's involvement and investment in the postwar scene, filtered necessarily through the home, is therefore characterized by the status of their material surroundings and their individual ability to make do and make good. For many women who desired participation in the postwar era's "democratic access to the good life" (Berlant *Cruel Optimism* 3), involvement and investment was limited to the material and consumerist scope of the home. This marriage of social mobility to the home also shaped women's relationships to others as well, not only the men in their lives and even their children, as Steedman

describes, but also, as I will argue below, to new Britons who would come to share the streets and homes with the white working-class after the War.

Nice (White) Homes: Mapping Race onto Desires for the Good Life

The disconnect between the desire for social mobility and the means by which working-class women could labour towards these goals was made even more complex by changes in the demographics of working-class neighbourhoods. Recollections of the postwar era, as I discussed in my introduction, are perhaps as much characterized by the memory of working-class affluence as they are by changes to citizenship laws and the British Empire's transformation from "colonialism" to "commonwealth." Although, as Laura Tabili has demonstrated, migration occurred long before these geopolitical changes, the British Nationality Act (1948) and the decolonization of British territories in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s caused a surge in migration from the (previous) colonies to the metropole. Widespread migration to the UK in the 1950s is often remembered as producing tensions between migrants of colour and white working-class Britons, particularly in the home or residential neighbourhood. Framed as competitors for the limited resources of state-subsidized housing, especially after the residential damage after the War, the presence of migrants in working-class neighbourhoods and shared dwellings was also perceived as a sign of downward mobility for the white residents of mixed-race housing. Thus, race becomes an important component in the ways in which working-class homes and the women who live within them are viewed and evaluated. In what follows I argue that white working-class women's domestic labour towards the good life is also the

labour towards bourgeois standards of whiteness, which involve a complex negotiation of new attitudes toward racialized others and multiculturalism at the same time that it commands an investment in whiteness as a rigid and racially superior identity. As I detailed at the outset of this chapter, I utilize the term “labour” to capture an effort or action (physically or emotionally) that not only produces goods and services, but also “social and political subjects” (Weeks 8) and subjectivities. An important part of my argument involves complicating narratives of shared living among white working classes and people of colour as predominantly characterized by Powellite racism. Although the performance of whiteness among the working classes is often framed as outright racial exclusion and violence, the desire to become more materially comfortable and socially respectable also invoked the adoption of cosmopolitan attitudes and relationships conceived of as modern and “classy.” Thus, the figures of class-aspirational white femininity that I analyze can be seen as capitalizing on the presence of racialized others as an outside source of cultural credit that could be profited from within the limits of the home.

In the postwar trend of “domestic” ethnography, sociological writing by Pearl Jephcott, Elspeth Huxley, and Ruth Glass (among others) emphasizes the difference between the appearance of white and migrant homes, with dilapidation, dirtiness and unfashionable décor becoming racialized signs of degradation for particular neighbourhoods. In her urban-ethnography *A Problem Area: Notes on Notting Hill* (1964), Jephcott remarks that the façade of the black dwelling is marked by damaged windows with “skinny, dirty curtains” and a yard that is “a shambles” (84). The unkempt

and “sluttish” homes that Jephcott describes again and again as being characteristic of migrant dwellings resonate with Steedman’s description of her mother’s own “bare, curtainless” home because, like the childhood home in *Landscape*, the migrant’s apartment is also cast as a “terrible place for a new baby” (Jephcott 41). Jephcott even further racializes the “unfit” home, as it is contrasted with the “nice home” and “pride of possession [...] that is characteristic of the working-class family of today” (65). Here, the adjective “working-class” is not only codified as white, but also in terms of modernization and class mobility that has, as its opposite, the migrant housewife who is accustomed to “the poverty and yaws of certain of the rural areas of Jamaica or the mud and mosquito-ridden villages of much of the coastal plain in British Guiana” (84).

Although on occasion Jephcott patronizingly notes that black women make better do with their meagre living conditions than “the white housewife living under parallel conditions” (83), the manner in which white and migrant working classes are compared make this “parallel condition” obsolete, for Jephcott represents the white working classes as having moved up in the world in comparison to previous histories of destitution and squalor.

Describing a house painter from the Caribbean who has been unable to find work, Jephcott writes: “[s]itting humped on the edge of his bed, in his comfortless and bare one-roomed home, he could have been any Durham unemployed miner of the 1930s” (83).

Jephcott goes on to say that the “Caribbean villagers” who live in Notting Hill take on “[u]npleasant habits which most English families have now discarded” such as “filthy dustbins” and “blocked lavatories” (91), and “general disregard of the public decencies” (84). Notably, the “decencies” that Jephcott lists above (the maintenance of garbage, and

a clean bathroom and presentable curtains) correspond to the proper maintenance of the home.⁵¹

In the racist representations of the mid-twentieth century, anxiety over migration as a cultural invasion of England was repeatedly articulated through the portrayal of migrant dwellings and tenants of colour as signs of downward mobility for the white working classes, especially white working-class women. This collapsing of xenophobia, the working-class home, and white femininity is infamously portrayed in Enoch Powell's 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech, wherein Powell describes the plight of an elderly white woman who has lost her family in the war, and tries to make money by taking in lodgers. Refusing to accept any tenants of colour (although, confusingly, Powell also claims she was "harassed" by two black male lodgers), Powell states that she was routinely antagonized by people of colour on her street, which Powell also notes was rapidly emptying of white residents: "[w]ith growing fear, she saw one house after another taken over. The quiet street became a place of noise and confusion. Regretfully, her white tenants moved out." When the white homeowner goes to see if she can get her taxes reduced and complains about people of colour trying to rent her rooms, the woman at the office tells her "racial prejudice won't get [her] anywhere in this country"; the scene

⁵¹ There are of course voices that oppose this mapping of race onto a scale of domestic propriety and class. For example, in *Small Island*, Andrea Levy describes the home of a white landlady through the eyes of Hortense, a young black woman recently emigrated from Jamaica. Throughout Hortense's narrative thread, she is frequently dismayed by the hygiene and aesthetics of both her British home and landlady, which are both characterized by Hortense as drab and "distasteful" (329). On the one hand, it is worth noting that Levy's representation of black and white feminine standards of aesthetic and hygienic practice still evaluates femininity via women's labour towards domestic and bodily appearance. However, Levy's characterization does interrupt the mid-century representation of whiteness as signifying cleanliness and an attachment to "modern" aesthetics and decorum, whereas black femininity is depicted as the opposite.

closes with the elderly woman fearing she will go to prison, because of “the new Race Relations Bill” (Powell).

That Powell’s notorious racism and fear of immigration is exemplified through the anxieties over the loss of the white home resonates with many postwar representations of inter-racial cohabitation as entailing a kind of “home invasion,” both in terms of the individual or private dwelling and the *homeland*. Wendy Webster, James Procter, and Sidney Jacobs (among others) note the similarity of language in postwar descriptions of the so-called problem of immigration at the national level as well as the perception of a migrant takeover of white homes and neighbourhoods. Anxiety about the permeability of home/national borders and this permeability’s “threat” to whiteness was further intertwined with a panic surrounding the supposed vulnerability of white women; if “nationalism [...] is constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power” (McClintock 63), so too is the domestic space a gendered one that is frequently made synonymous with the female body, and thus requiring “protection” and discipline. Marjorie Garber’s observation that “[i]t is almost impossible to use the metaphor of woman as house without implying some law about her” (125) becomes clear in the discursive similarities between anxieties about “miscegenation” and racial discrimination in housing in postwar Britain. In his analysis of Sheila Patterson’s urban ethnography of black Londoners, *Dark Strangers* (1963), James Procter writes that Patterson’s “account of the [black or mixed-race] dwelling place is invested with the same kind of fragile boundary conditions as the white female body” (25). In Procter’s description, the domestic politics of a so-called migrant invasion are

twofold. First, by gendering the home as feminized, racist depictions of black residency conjures the imagery of penetrative violation, heightening the image of the vulnerability of white residences through stereotypes of the victimized female body that requires paternalistic policing and protection. Second, as Procter's attention to Patterson's parallels between the home and the white female body shows, this trope also entrenches the place of women within the home, such that racialized status of the home is inextricable from the status of its white female resident. This intertwined representation of white nation, white household, and white femininity thus conveys an ideology that is played up in Powell's speech, as Powell's overall polemic against immigration is exemplified through his individual "case study" of a beleaguered white landlady in a working-class neighbourhood. Importantly for my own argument, the connection between the boundaries of the white and feminized domicile and the nation are further intertwined with class mobility in this speech: the presence of black men on the white landlady's street and in her home are correlated with her descent into poverty.

Powell's narrative of the beleaguered white landlady also correlates with the equivalence made in postwar ethnographies between migrant dwellings and lower-classness; in the intersection of race, class, and the appearance of the home, the white desire for a "nice home" or "nice neighbourhood" in the story of the white landlady is brought down by the ostensibly anachronistic lifestyles of new migrants. For Powell, this interconnection of mixed-race homes and neighbourhoods with the class status of white women is made even more detrimental by the cosmopolitan attitudes of his 1960s present. In Powell's story, the black tenants he portrays (or fabricates) not only spell out

downward mobility for the landlady: her complaints about these potential migrant lodgers are furthermore construed as an outlandish and archaic mentality by the woman at the housing office. Indeed, she is told racism “will not get her anywhere in this country.” Although iterated by Powell as a misguided liberalism that is outside of the populist working-class identity he is trying to cultivate, the synonymy of racially cosmopolitan attitudes with “getting somewhere” is also a recurrent trope in narratives of white working-class women’s labour towards social uplift in the postwar era.

If, as I have detailed above, the white female body and the home are intertwined in class-aspirational stories, then it is unsurprising that the home is a prominent feature in women’s negotiations of the class-race axis described above. We see these domestic negotiations in *Landscape*, where Steedman reflects upon her mother’s taking in lodgers, often white male labourers, to make extra money. The parallel between Steedman’s reflection on lodgers and Powell’s construction of the victimized white landlady suggests that such a means of making a bit of extra money was not an uncommon form of labour for postwar housewives with spare rooms. The labour involved in offering one’s home to lodgers becomes part of feminized domestic work in its implication of care. To “take someone in” is to care for them by providing shelter, cleaning after them and even cooking for them; it is thus much like other gendered labour within domestic space, albeit different in its ability to translate into actual monetary compensation. As I argued earlier, if working-class women were often inhibited from taking on full-time work or other pursuits outside the home, then taking in lodgers was likely one of the few lucrative forms of work that women could engage in. Even for Steedman’s mother, who also worked as a

department-store manicurist (another form of service work), her home became a much-needed means of income that she could utilize.

As theorists such as Procter and Sara Ahmed have pointed out, the language of “taking in” has connotations of femininity, as well as vulnerability. This is detailed in Procter’s analysis of feminized boundaries, as male bodies – are taken in to both the feminized home and the female body (25). Likewise, the act of taking in is explored by Ahmed in her work on migration and asylum-seeking. Although Ahmed locates her discussion within a much more contemporary Britain, her attention to British politicians’ construction of immigration as making Britain soft, permeable, and vulnerable (and thus feminized), is in line with the postwar attitudes toward postcolonial diaspora that Procter describes (*Cultural Politics* 2). However, for Steedman’s mother, taking in a lodger is an act of opportunity, not of vulnerability. As Steedman explains, in addition to the income, renting out a room in their home also provided her mother contact with people outside the limited space of her white working-class home, or even the space of the upper-class department store where she gave manicures to wealthy white women. This contact was important for Steedman’s mother, as taking in lodgers of colour was a means of not only gaining financial capital, but a kind of cosmopolitan cultural capital as well. For example, while most lodgers were deemed too unclean to use the family’s bath, one Indian student was permitted access based on the mother’s assumption that “Hindus had to wash in running water,” and that they were cleaner than white working-class Britons. Steedman observes that

[h]e had the charm of the exotic for [my mother]: anything foreign, for which she

could show classy tolerance, was a route away from her social situation. Later, she was to call herself a Powellite. (59)

The Indian lodger, who is accepted into the home as someone whose (assumed) foreign habits require separate and special treatment, becomes a hoped-for catalyst of cultural capital for Steedman's mother; her relationship to him delineates the mother's own relationship to her classed self. Like the fine clothes that Steedman labels "stepping stones" (16) that lead — or are hoped to lead — the way out of the shame and hardship of working-class life, so too, it seems, does a cosmopolitan attitude connote membership of more affluent and cultured classes; it is, in Steedman's interpretation, a route away.

Steedman's interpretation of her mother's conduct towards her Indian lodger as a means of cultivating desirable cosmopolitanism is also drawn out in Mica Nava's book *Visceral Cosmopolitanism*, wherein she argues that white British women are more likely to develop attitudes of tolerance than white British men. Perhaps different from Steedman's description of her mother's desire for cosmopolitanism, Nava's "visceral cosmopolitanism" is based on erotic curiosity. Nava argues that postwar white women's sexual interest in black men was owing to the fact that "the image of the 'negro' [sic] was more likely to be associated with modernity and the city — with jazz and swing and the Hollywood landscape of glamour and opportunity" (10). Alan Sinfield also discusses the appeal of black subcultural music like jazz and blues for the white working classes, as they gave access to cultural — or rather, subcultural — capital that was not preserved for the elite (181-182). Nava explains that black masculinity, with its potential for connotations of stylish metropolitan subculture and fashionableness, held a particular

attraction for young women of the white working classes, who fantasized about “opportunity” through consumption and cinema culture. Interestingly, what is repeated in both Steedman’s mother’s performance of tolerance and Nava’s “visceral cosmopolitanism” is the language of the “good life” and ways in which racialized others are a (hoped for) means of getting there. Nava argues:

[a]t the vanguard of English modernity, these young [white] women and their fantasies of a better life laid the groundwork for a more liberal cosmopolitan culture, one which anticipated the postwar emancipation of emotions (Wouters 1998) and the escalating miscegenation of white, black, and mixed-race British at the end of the twentieth century (94).

Here, Steedman’s mother’s “show of classy tolerance” and Nava’s cosmopolitan sexuality among white British women do not seem so divergent; racial tolerance—itsself already a concept that maintains racial hierarchies rather than taking them apart—becomes a means for change in the fantasy of a “better life.”⁵² Like Steedman’s mother’s attempts at grasping “stepping stones” to cultural respectability, Nava’s exploration of cosmopolitan white female sexuality is couched in the fantasy-driven setting of postwar consumerism and marketing, where the “working girl” aspired to the “modern and socially classless image” that was offered in the clothing shops on Oxford Street and Hollywood film (85).

Like the upper-class lifestyle that high-street shops allowed working-class women to perform, the consumption of eroticized others also contributed to a performance of

⁵² See Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (2008).

individual modernity and fashionableness. Although Nava reads white women's attraction to black men as subversive and political, interracial desire also depends upon an economic system of embodied cultural capital; white women's capitalization on black masculinity is justified as a means of political identity-making without considering its complicity with oppressive structures of white ascendancy. This point is made in Sarah Brophy's analysis of Andrea Levy's *Small Island*, a novel that narrativizes the racial and sexual politics of shared dwelling in the postwar era between a white British landlady and her lodgers from Jamaica. In the final scene of the novel, the landlady gives up the mixed race child she bears in order to maintain her marriage and her status, as she herself came from a working-class background and married into a higher social status. Brophy argues that this act reveals that "white feminine self-preservation and racism bolster each other" (Brophy 131). Thus, the desire to transcend the boundary of class can indeed reinforce the boundaries of race, even when the desire for class mobility provokes appearances of cosmopolitanism. Although Nava discusses sexual intimacy between black men and white women, and the potential for empathy and identification that these relations allow, "miscegenation," as she puts it (94), in the dance hall or club is quite different than when it takes place in the normativizing barriers of the home—especially when that home is attached to desires for upward mobility.

Cultivating relationships with racialized others as a means of cultural capital has particularly unsettling consequences when faced with the potential instability of good-life fantasies. As we see in *Landscape*, Steedman describes her mother as putting on a display of tolerance, and even special privilege, for her lodger of colour in the hopes of

accumulating cultural capital. When this “doesn’t work” she becomes, in the very next sentence, a “Powellite.” If newcomers to Britain are engaged with, taken in, and desired as a hopeful means of investing in one’s ability to perform class, then it is clear that migrants, as moving pieces in a precarious strategy of ascendancy, can also become scapegoats for the disappointment of these hopes. Of course, it is also important to note the way in which Steedman herself maintains distance from her mother across their class divide in her descriptions of her mother’s contradictory politics. Unlike the mother’s failed practices of class ascendancy, Steedman has successfully moved to the middle class through her university education, and now arguably frames her mother’s attitudes through the stereotype of working-class racism as a result of economic and social frustration. This insinuation that an impressionable and despairing working class adopts Powellism (and other forms of racist politics) in times of need is also, unsettlingly, one of the core arguments of Denys Blakeway’s *Rivers of Blood* documentary that I described in the introduction, not to mention the popular explanation for the “Leave” vote in the aftermath of the 2016 EU Referendum. By representing her mother’s movements between tolerance and racism as contingent upon the mother’s relationship to her own class desires, Steedman risks stereotyping not only her mother but also the working classes more generally as influential vehicles of racist populism.

Above, I described the way in which the mother’s class-aspirational life and its failure was symbolized by Steedman through the structure of the house as a “before and after” equation, beginning with the scene of the health visitor’s insult upstairs and the lonely spare death in the downstairs kitchen. Similarly, the mother’s relationship to

racialized others is also framed by the home. However, while Steedman's quick sketch of her mother's racial attitudes and their mediation by class desire allude to the ideology of the white and aspirational home and its attachment to feminized narratives of labour towards the good life, this briefly described memory does not give us the full picture of the racialized home economy of class aspiration. The intersection of race, gender, and class desire is more fully presented in the British playwright Ted Willis's drama *Hot Summer Night*, and its subsequent film adaptation *Flame in the Streets*. While most criticism focuses on the film adaptation of Willis's play, I will be considering both the film and play versions of this story, as I am particularly interested in the original play script's more concentrated focus on interracial encounters in the home. In the film, settings include a factory, the street, a community pool, and a tenement building, whereas the play intriguingly never leaves the main characters' house. This housebound focus in the original direction raises interesting questions about the "backgrounding" of the home and domestic femininity in the subsequent film adaptation, which I will address below.

Like *Landscape for a Good Woman*, both *Hot Summer* and *Flame* portray interracial relationships between postcolonial migrant men and white working class women that are, as I will show, refracted through the prism of class aspiration in the home. Where the Indian lodger in *Landscape* is scarcely given a paragraph, the entirety of Willis's play (and later screenplay) grapples with the ways in which working-class race relations are shaped by rapid postwar changes in economy and class mobility. Unlike Steedman's exclusive focus on class and gender, the imbrication of these two constructs do not seem, at first glance, to be what the story is "about." Indeed, the advertised plot proclaims an

unlikely love story between a young white woman and black man within a working-class London neighborhood torn by prejudice and violence. And yet, the impact of the affair is not registered on the level of the wider community or the workplace (where the lovers meet) but instead highlights how changes in working-class structures of feeling are played out on the stage of domestic space — which of course is literally a stage in its theatrical production. Although *Hot Summer* and *Flame* explore issues of class and race politics within the union, the factory, and the street, the aspirational working-class home and the woman who embodies it become the core concern of this “race problem” narrative of the 1950s. I argue that, despite the “backgrounding” of the domestic to the plotline of romantic drama and racist violence in the streets, these seemingly more exciting and politically charged threads are ultimately subsumed by the upward aspirations of Nell, a working-class housewife, and the racialized channels by which her vision of the good life — a better home — are achieved. The struggles of racial harmony and freedom become not only subordinate to the feminized labours of the home, but also capitalized on in the female labourer’s desired outcome of upward mobility — a desire that has as tendency to preserve the ascendancy of whiteness and the continued marginalization of racialized others.

Negotiating Race and Class Mobility in *Flame in the Streets* and *Hot Summer Night*

The film adaptation of Willis’s play *Flame in the Street* begins on Guy Fawkes Day, where we are first introduced to Kathie and Peter (or “Sonny” in the play), teachers at a public school in a working-class neighbourhood. In the opening credits, we see both Kathie, a white woman, and Peter, a black man, each modeling a happy image of

cohesive multicultural community: in one scene, Kathie offers encouragement to a black female student, and in another Peter gently admonishes a white boy for eating during class, a reprimand with which the errant student complies by cheerfully putting his apple away.⁵³ While, as I will detail later on, the young couple becomes on the one hand an optimistic figure of what a tolerant and just multi-racial Britain could be, their relationship is, on the other, the means through which cultural capital is accrued for Kathie's class-conscious mother Nell. Cosmopolitan cultural capital is also importantly gained amid the turbulence of race-violence and prejudice, which we are quickly made aware of as the cheerful school scene cuts to a group of working-class children setting fire to a racist caricature-doll in the street. It is with this rapid change of tone that we are introduced to Kathie's father Jacko, a white middle-aged shop steward who works in a multi-racial factory. The workers of colour are notably relegated to hard-labour jobs — namely loading freight — and, as Mica Nava and Lola Young discuss, are represented as behaving in such racially stereotyped ways as cat-calling their white female co-workers. Distinguished from the other migrant labourers is the “serious” black worker Gabriel Gomez, who is up for promotion for the position of charge-hand in the loading section. The promotion becomes a divisive issue in the union, as many of the white labourers feel that it is an affront to those who properly “belong,” who should be considered for promotion not because they have more experience than Gomez, but because they are white Britons. It is over Gomez's promotion that Jacko becomes, at first, the moral voice

⁵³ However, as I will focus on in the next chapter, the position of the teacher of colour in both postwar and contemporary British literature and film is often complexly balanced between exploited emotional labourer and alien (and potentially dangerous) other.

of the story, as he fights for Gomez's right to move up the ranks in a union meeting by drawing attention to the trade union slogan of "united we stand, divided we fall." Jacko warns that if black workers are continually denied promotion or respect in the workplace, they will leave the unions and become "a pool of cheap non-union labour" (Baker). Successfully appealing to the anxieties of his fellow workers over the strength of the union, Gomez's promotion is approved.⁵⁴

Despite Gomez and Jacko's triumph at work, the racial politics of the home produce a different moral compass for Jacko and his family. While white and black workers may unite in the workplace, the rules of the factory or the public school classroom cannot be followed in the home, where division must be maintained. As Webster elaborates in *Imagining Home*, spheres of public and private are both gendered and separated in the film, not only in terms of their occupation by male and female characters, but also in terms of the rules of racial contact and moral codes that are attached to them. Jacko's anti-racist achievement in the workplace is thus quickly made murky by the politics of home, particularly when his daughter Kathie becomes romantically involved with Peter, a Jamaican migrant. In both film and stage versions of the story, Kathie and Peter/Sonny have been seeing each other for several months, and are "found out" by Kathie's mother Nell when a family friend sees the lovers together. The knowledge that her daughter is in a relationship with a black man reveals Nell's deeply entrenched racism and causes division — much like Gomez's promotion divided the union — in the family. In the film,

⁵⁴ However, as Young has argued, Jacko's speech ultimately ignores the structural politics of "divide and rule [...] instead binding the issue to the micro-politics of individualized self-interest" (47).

Nell rushes to the union meeting to meet Jacko and inform him of Kathie's transgression, the only time, as Webster notes, that Nell leaves her home (Webster 56). Although Jacko at first resists intervening in Kathie's relationship, he finally yields to Nell and takes on this issue — ironically, with the same passion that he exerted to fight prejudice in his union.

This separation between the morals of the workplace and the home are even more intensified in Willis's *Hot Summer Night*, where the setting remains the Palmer home. The issue of Gabe Gomez's promotion, and the resistance to it, is taken up in the living room. In this early scene, Jacko has a debate with a junior co-worker who has come to discuss the issue of Gomez's promotion with him. Willis's staging of Jacko and his co-worker's union debate in the front room of Jacko's home foreshadows the entanglement of class and domestic politics that occur later in the play, and their imbrication with the "race issue" that has been produced within British society more generally, and here working-class communities more specifically. As in the film scene described above, Jacko persuades his co-worker to back the promotion of Gomez, an anti-racist triumph that, when won in the front room, only adds to the hypocrisy of Jacko's attempt to dissuade Kathie from marrying Sonny in the same room later that day. This difference in Jacko's attitude towards social justice in the workplace and in the home also speaks to the deeper anxieties that mixed-race marriages and the sexual politics of racism elicit. Returning once more to Procter's observation about the parallel between the boundaries of the white home and those of the white female body, the front room becomes an important site of white-race policing and protection. Whereas the issue of racial prejudice

within the masculine space of the factory can be abstracted outside of the domestic sphere even if its problems are debated within the home, the idea of Sonny entering the white working-class home as part of the family is unthinkable to Jacko (and to Nell) in its significance as a sexual trespass of white femininity. This division between racism at work and in the home surfaces in other cultural texts of the time period, for example in Pearl Jephcott's sociological *Notes on a Troubled Area* (1964) where she observes that white working-class Londoners were more apt to adopt congenial workplace relationships with migrants of colour than they were in their neighbourhoods or homes (85). This dissonance of attitudes speaks to the ways in which class aspiration intersects with the politics of reproduction and white nationalism. As I will show, the labour towards upward mobility and whiteness are explicitly domesticated — and therefore feminized — in Willis's play and film adaptation.

In *Flame*, Nell's desire for class uplift is first revealed when Jacko discusses the possibility of his own promotion to an office job, which will change the financial situation of the family. Nell responds to the news by stating that Jacko's promotion will mean that they can finally upgrade their home and neighbourhood. When Jacko rejects Nell's statement — he was born in that home and is a man who honours his “roots” — Nell becomes upset, and Jacko wonders what has gotten into her “all of a sudden.” Jacko's father, who lives with them, tells him her feelings are not sudden, and that their house does not have a bathroom — something that is as important to Nell, he feels, as union politics are to Jacko. When the couple fights over Kathie's involvement with Peter, it is again Jacko's father (who, as a retired man, spends most of his day at home with

Nell) who reminds Jacko of Nell's unhappiness and its need for his response. Happiness in *Flame* (and *Hot Summer*) circulates closely with markers of class mobility, in this case the desire for a modern home, complete with a bathroom. Nell's particular desire to have a house with a bathroom is steeped in postwar meaning, as many working-class homes only had an outdoor toilet and no fixed bath even into the 1950s. This class signifier is present in other artistic work of the time: Tony Richardson's film adaptation of Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) closes with the roguish working-class hero Arthur and his girlfriend Doreen looking over a valley of newly built homes, one of which Doreen declares that she would like — with a bathroom. Of course, while the house with a bathroom is a poignant goal of class ascendancy for very practical reasons, it is also codified in these texts as a pathologized form of feminine materialism. As Webster argues, domesticity and family are “associated with materialist aspirations, neurosis, and hysteria” (58) at the same time that the domicile and British femininity are symbolic of whiteness, civilization, and nation. This tension is arguably revealed in the unhappiness of postwar female characters, who are both exposed to modern lifestyles and desiring of change, and repressed by the racialized politics of domesticity and reproduction that limits their agency and keeps them sequestered in the home. In contrast to the struggles for working class-rights and working-class roots in Jacko's case, or against postwar complacency and status quo in Arthur's, the desires for the “good life” aspired to by female characters like Nell or Doreen are represented as not only overly consumerist and “passive” but also as “threatening the male solidarity and traditional values of working-class community” (Webster 69). The connection between femininity

and the dissolution of working-class communalism is also made in *Hot Summer Night*, which opens with Jacko's father, "Old Man," complaining about the fate of the union and its changes over time. The Old Man criticizes the postwar culture of affluence, claiming that people are oversaturated with "pictures in the paper, pictures on the telly, pictures in the picture palaces" (2); he goes on to correlate the passivity of postwar culture to the emasculation of trade workers, who would rather have "tea parties and stiff collars" than fight and labour for a Socialist cause (3). The correlation between a spectacular culture and the lack of "fight" in union men is perhaps made more poignant in its location in the feminized space of the home. Although Jacko is always in and out of the door in Baker's adaptation, in the play his activity outside of the home is purely discursive — he even tries to leave to catch a train and fails — as if he has already become the soft and placated man that his father warns he will become.

The gendered politics of the home are intensified by Kathie's pronouncement that she is in a relationship with a Jamaican man, and intends to marry him. In an altercation with her daughter Kathie, where Nell demands that Kathie "be sensible" and break off her relationship with Sonny, Nell is struck by her imagination of Kathie's life with a black man:

Kathie — you'll have children — black children [...] [h]ave you seen the way they live? Have you seen 'em — six, eight, ten to a room? Is that how you want to finish up — in one room with a horde of black children — in a slum?

The understanding of white femininity as both intimately connected to the material conditions of the home and at risk of degeneration and endangerment in postwar England

is evident in Nell's response. Despite Kathie's protests for her to stop her racist tirade, Nell goes on to tell Kathie both violently — shaking her daughter — and pleadingly — clinging to her — that she “didn't bring her up for that” (*Hot Summer* 31). In the film version, Nell exclaims that she did not bring Kathie up to have her “kind of life,” developing a link between Nell's unhappiness and lack of upward mobility with the assumed racialized “slum” that Kathie will live in if she marries Sonny. Like Jephcott's racist depiction of class ascendancy, where better futures are white and housed in hygienic and modern homes, and the impoverished and unhappy working-class past is now taken up by a new class of anachronistic migrants, racial identity and working-class mobility are similarly framed in Willis's narrative: Nell's perceived failure to attain a modern home is made equal to her daughter's choice to marry a man of colour.

This projection of the desire of the parent onto the future of the child is taken up by Ahmed in her analysis of the phrase “I just want you to be happy” (*Promise* 19). Writing about the queer child's coming out, Ahmed theorizes that the parents become unhappy about the assumed hardships of queer life, which is already constructed as unhappy life, or as life without the happy objects of marriage and children. Nell's crisis of happiness when she “sees” Kathie living with her black partner, and “the sneers and the laughs” that Nell believes will come with it (*Hot Summer* 55), can be read as the perceived failure of Kathie to orient herself towards the objects necessary for a “better life”:

The good life, in other words, is imagined through the proximity of objects. There is no doubt that the affective repertoire of happiness gives us images of a certain kind of life [...] there is no doubt that it is hard to separate images from the

historic privileging of heterosexual conduct, as expressed in romantic love and coupledness, as well as the idealization of domestic privacy. (Ahmed, *Happiness* 90)

In this particular context, I extend Ahmed's theorization of heterosexual conduct by considering the privileging of white coupledness, and its assumption of certain kinds of domestic living. In failing to achieve the upwardly mobile life she had wanted, Nell's desire for a better home, and thus a better white life, are invested in her daughter; in her daughter's failure to be aligned with these desires for white life, Nell's failure is apparently doubled. This is dramatically illustrated in the original play: when Kathie threatens to leave the home with Sonny, Nell comes after her with a kitchen knife, later claiming she wanted to kill both Kathie and herself when her husband apprehends the knife (55).

Willis's depiction of Kathie resembles Nava's depiction of cosmopolitan white female sexuality in that Kathie's desire for Sonny coincides with her resistance to a traditional, British way of life. Kathie tells her mother and father, "[y]ou're all old, the lot of you. You don't want to understand. You want to make me like the others — prejudiced and stupid" (40). Yet while Kathie stakes her happiness outside of aspirational working-class norms of upward mobility, the outlook for her and Sonny's life remains ominously foreclosed. In both versions of this story, the only established mixed-race couple is Judy and Gabe Gomez, Jacko's co-worker. Nell uses Judy as an example in her arguments with Kathie, even interviewing Judy in *Hot Summer* when Judy comes over to speak to Jacko about her husband Gomez' promotion. When asked if Judy was happy with her choice in

marrying Gomez and having his child, Judy cannot answer. She can only describe her life in slum housing — which the film represents as being run by a materialistic and neglectful “pimp” landlord of colour — and her alienation from her white family and community.

Yet, given Nell’s deep feelings of unhappiness, it would seem that existing white working-class roles for women are not exactly a model for good living, either. At least, not the “kind of life” that Nell has been tied to in her relationship with Jacko, who represents a classic form of working-class masculinity that is in opposition to the embourgeoisement that social theorists like Michael Young, Peter Willmott, or Pearl Jephcott envisioned as the movement towards ideal white living.⁵⁵ This is not to say that Nell and Jacko’s domestic life is cast as *not* white in this narrative; however, Nell and Jacko are still arguably dwelling within the “historical” position of working-class squalor that Jephcott identifies in *A Troubled Area*. The Palmer household is described in *Hot Summer* as “buried in the middle of one of a hundred dusty” and “crowded” streets (1). Given this description and its implication of anachronism, they are perhaps living the “wrong” white life, one that has been replaced in the eyes of social investigators like Jephcott and Patterson by migrant populations. Thus, Nell’s hope to escape from the “kind of life” she has led could be seen as a recognition of the way in which women were bound to the exploitative contract of marrying into a “household.” However, any critique of Nell’s relationship to Jacko and the erasure of her labour is diverted into the fantasy of

⁵⁵ See Young and Willmott’s *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957).

a white, upwardly mobile life, which is still held out as the only tangible relief from hardship and oppression that the film has to offer.

At the end of both play and film, Nell and Jacko have a private moment where Nell lists all of the failures of their relationship. Nell claims Jacko never makes time for her, and makes love to her as if “taking a quick drink” (Baker). In her work on “race problem films,” Lola Young argues that “the implication is that White women with bourgeois aspirations when denied sexual satisfaction are susceptible to ‘irrational’ racial prejudice,” which “attempt[s] to explain away racism by locating prejudice in individuals, often already pathologised others, such as working-class youth or sexually frustrated women” (47). The connection between “unhappy housewives” (Ahmed 80) and “unhappy racism” (123) as both a problem of individuality (the antithesis of productive, masculine working-class solidarity) and the individual’s problem (that is, one of personal pathology such as Nell’s sexual or materialist frustration rather than the societal tensions of race and poverty that Young alludes to) is compounded by its connection to the home and its postwar connotations of “private life” and the nuclear family. Indeed, Nell’s admission that she is sexually dissatisfied is aligned with her sense of being devalued by Jacko more generally, as sex and sexuality are one of the primary means of capital usable for women outside of wage labour.

Nell’s sense of being in the background of Jacko’s life is further extended by her imbrication with the home itself. She is always represented as serving others, cleaning, and painting the house — the latter of which Jacko protests is something he should be doing, although never is in the home long enough to do. Although painting is not

portrayed as a traditional job for a housewife, Nell's labour for the appearance of the home conveys her investment in its upkeep as part of her desire for a respectable life, resonant with Jephcott's pronouncement that the appearance of the mid-century working-class home reflects the worthiness of its female occupant on the scale of social mobility. This imbrication is further accentuated by Nell when she tells Jacko that she feels as though she is literally becoming the house itself: "I became part of the fixtures [...] [I want] to be needed as a person, not a piece of furniture" (1961).

Despite Nell's proclamation that she wishes to be recognized and loved as a person outside of the home within which she has become associated, the possibility of a better home is nonetheless projected as the ultimate fulfillment of her desires. At the conclusion of their talk in the film, Jacko promises Nell that he will finally move to a larger and more modern house as both a means of absolving Nell's unhappiness, and, more importantly, as a reward for her accommodation of Kathie and Peter's interracial relationship. It is after this moment of reconciliation made by the guarantee of leaving behind the crowded and dirty streets of their East London home that Nell finally agrees to come downstairs and meet Peter. Thus, the *accommodation* of Kathie and Peter is made through the guarantee of better accommodations for Nell. And yet, the racialized structure of the white and aspirational home maintains distance between the two couples: the closing scene of the film, as a backdrop to the final credits, takes place in the front room. However, rather than closing on a scene of reconciliation and exchange, each couple stands facing each other with their backs to an opposing wall, with the breadth of the English hearth yawning between them.

In both Lola Young and Wendy Webster's discussions of the film, they read its ending, with the shaky reconciliation of Nell and Jacko's relationship and the inability to imagine Kathie and Peter's future, as re-establishing the white family and continuing the marginalization of bodies of colour in these confines. Certainly, given the emphasis on the home as a signifier of security and social respectability, the situation of "homelessness" that the young couple finds themselves in both the play and the film suggests that they may face the same fate as Judy and Gabe: poor housing, ostracization, and the future of insecurity and shame that Kathie's parents had feared. Young argues that the film is not actually "about" race itself, but is rather focused on the family as "a major site for the establishment and monitoring of sexual mores and behaviour whilst also serving as a metaphor for the nation. Thus a breach of the perceived integrity of the family is also figured as a breach of the cohesion of the nation" (84). Yet, at the same time, this rupture in the enclosed space of the Palmer family is presented as the catalyst for Nell's goals of upward mobility. Her labour in the home, her unhappiness, and her desire for upward mobility, all of which are vocalized throughout the play and film, go unrecognized until her altercation with Kathie about her decision to marry a man from Jamaica.

Departing from Young's and Webster's analyses, I would argue that the narrative is not "about" the relationship of Kathie and Peter, which it cannot really imagine in any material sense. All we can know of their future is the tentative acceptance of their relationship by Kathie's parents, framed as a triumph of reason and racial tolerance. For the young couple themselves, though, there is no indication of a future that is not equal to

the unhappy life of Judy in her marriage to Gomez. Instead, I maintain that the true focus and most dramatic outcome of both play and film is the replacement of working-class life with bourgeois respectability — a narrative of “becoming respectable” that importantly relies upon the “race problem” drama of Kathie and Peter/Sonny. In other words, it is not coincidental that this story confronts Jacko’s reluctance to move out of his traditional working-class neighbourhood at the same time that it exposes Nell’s deep-seated and irrational racism. Rather than interrogate her xenophobia or the crisis of happiness that is bound up in the desire for respectability — indeed, the fantasy of the good life and the compulsion to repeat whiteness in both Nell and Steedman’s mother appear exhausting and alienating — both film and play’s resolution relies upon the tolerance of racialized others in exchange for the promise of material signs of upward mobility. As we have seen with both Steedman’s representation of her mother and the character Nell in Willis’s script, negotiating race relations becomes part of the feminized domestic labour towards a normative “better life.” By leveraging herself into a more modern dwelling, Nell will likely benefit from a modern home, not only as a sign of higher social standing but also with the ease that modern fixtures and consumer durables (such as bathrooms and washing machines) have to offer domestic labourers. However, like Kathie and Peter’s undisclosed future and the dubiousness of their happiness, Nell’s future is also only a promise given by her husband — its fulfillment lies beyond the scope of the narrative, as well as her liberation from becoming “part of the furniture.” As Ahmed has argued, the promising nature of happiness binds us to social ideals, tells us what *should* make us happy — marriage, family, inclusion in the nation, etc. But the promise of happiness is,

unlike pleasure, always distant, postponed: it binds us, but is not bound to us (46). As continued struggles against gender and race-based oppression suggest, promises of happiness and equality based on — and overdetermined by — the confines of the white, patriarchal, and bourgeois domestic life offered in the final scene of *Flame in the Street* and *Hot Summer Night* are perhaps unimaginable at this narrative's close for good reason.

In *Landscape for a Good Woman*, *Hot Summer Night* and *Flame in the Street*, the tolerance of racial others and its articulation as necessary for social mobility offers no vision of social recognition and inclusion for migrants, or for the white working-class women who are intimately involved with them. The good life for women remains a white life amid both play and film's clear intentions to represent the irrationality and injustice of racism. Moreover, the accommodation of racial others as part of the labour towards the good life does not offer any real vision of change or freedom for the white women who undertake these performances of cosmopolitanism. Neither Steedman's mother nor Nell become uncoupled from the burden of the home and its labours — not only in the sense of housework and child care, but also, and particularly for these postwar women, the labour towards self-making and social aspiration in a so-called “classless age.” In the texts that I have discussed here, white working-class women's aspirations for class mobility are not only confined to domesticity, wherein all autonomy and desire are subordinated to the appearance of the home and its (assumed) control by a male “head” of the household, but must be labored towards through racially-coded performances of class. The feminized good life, if it is to be achieved at all, is reached only through negotiations of cultural mores packaged as “modern” at the same time that upward mobility must

inevitably, as it has always done, corroborate the sanctity of the privileged white home, as well as the white nation.

**Chapter Three: From Neoliberal Terrorist to
Emotional Labourer: The Postcolonial Teacher
after Empire**

The concept of “conversion,” whether religious or ethnic, has been at the centre of both artistic and journalistic representations of the British council school of late. For example, in the spring of 2014, the state intervened in what has come to be known as “Operation Trojan Horse,” which involved the installment of right-wing Muslim heads of several state-funded schools in Birmingham with the purported aim of educating the students in a particular religious worldview and a rejection of the West. In the report on the Trojan Horse inquiry written by Peter Clarke, Metropolitan Police Chief and appointed Deputy Commissioner of counter-terrorism, Clarke states that

Whether the motivation reflects a political agenda, a deeply held religious conviction, personal gain or achieving influence within the communities, the effect has been to limit the life chances of the young people in [the schools’] care and to render them vulnerable to more pernicious influences in the future. (*The Guardian* 17 July 2014)

In Clarke’s analysis, British schoolchildren are not only “vulnerable” (a word that gets repeated four times by Clarke in the quoted report) to dangerous Otherness, but it is feared that this vulnerability also creates limited “life chances,” a failure to develop and succeed in an institutional space that is supposed to foster the development of productive British citizens.

British state-funded education, as it was developed within the welfare state, was instated “as a means of individual self-development” within a liberal democracy (Ku 580). In particular, the 1944 Education Act in the UK was built upon an apparent “deep and common urge” in British governance “towards equality and opportunity and a new level of common fellowship” (Butler quoted in Ku 583). The Act made publicly funded state schools more accessible to the working classes, colonial migrants, and girls by removing fees for secondary schooling (since 1918, only elementary school was free), increasing the compulsory leaving age as well as expanding mandatory schooling beyond “rudimentary education” for “all the children whom [British] soil maintains” (Section 211). The Act also implemented more care for the students in “slum schools” (mainly working-class children and the children of newly migrated citizens) by providing meals and medical services (Section 214). Almost two decades after this influential Act came the 1963 Newsom Report, which delineated the need for improvements in schools overall, and especially for students “depressed by environmental and linguistic handicaps” and living in “slum areas” (xvi). Youth impaired, in the language of the Report, by “the limitations of their home backgrounds,” are conceptualized as “unrealized talent” of which the students themselves, and the nation, “cannot afford [to waste], humanly or economically speaking” (xvi). As both the Education Act and Newsom Report argue, the school (and particularly, the secondary or high school) is particularly important to the concept of democratic access to social mobility because its very purpose is the development of youth into citizens who have the credentials and training to participate in society and contribute to the economy. Of course, as ambitious and positive as these

recommendations appear, the desire to improve education for all by targeting and classifying specific populations as lagging or even pathological had the potential for very negative outcomes. For example, in Paul Warmington’s examination of black British experience in postwar education, he observes that black children were segregated in schools for the “educationally subnormal” (4). Moreover, as I will discuss later in the chapter, the postwar education system was often not capable of addressing the emotional and spiritual needs of its working-class students, who were still impacted by the poverty and discrimination they faced every day, in spite of the “gay colours” (Newsom Report 12) of their updated welfare-state schools.

Although the abovementioned polemic against terrorist agendas in schools invokes this postwar image of state education as a site of democratic access to opportunity and success, the literary responses to conversion in multicultural urban schools is much more ambivalent towards this narrative. Tanika Gupta’s *White Boy* (2008), Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* (2000), Abi Morgan’s film *White Girl* (2008), and Gautam Malkani’s novel *Londonstani* (2006) all feature or at least represent the figure of the converted youth in the British state school. Notably, all except *White Teeth* present this figure as a white child. The recent trend in literature and film of the minoritized and converted white child is potentially indicative of a wider cultural representation of whiteness as destabilized from its assumed position of majority and superiority in the imperial metropole; in some texts, the decentering of whiteness is depicted through a celebration of British multiculturalism, and in others, it is framed through narratives of white crisis and the threat of immigrant invasion. *Londonstani*, which is the contemporary

novel I closely analyze in here, features the main character and narrator Jas, whose investment in a desi identity is so strong that his whiteness is only revealed at the end of the novel. As I develop in my analysis, Jas's desi mentor Sanjay is reflective of contemporary post-9/11 and 7/7 connotations of "brown terror," as he is not only a destructive force in Jas' life and the life of his family, but also, as we discover, the nation as well. Jas not only describes his "education" in becoming desi as requiring him to abandon his social values and scholarly interests (all codified in the novel as 'white'), but Jas's education also apparently manipulates him into abetting the literal destruction of his family's business. The characterization of Sanjay as destructive of white families and livelihoods seems to prefigure Peter Clarke's portrayal of Muslim teachers as not only dangerous figures who prey on the futures of British youth, but also (it would seem) free radicals without social or historical contexts or motivations. In this way, the ethnic "converting" figures in *Londonstani* are exemplary of Sara Ahmed's description what she calls the "figure" in her book *Strange Encounters* (2000). Creating an analogy between Marx's fetishized commodity and the figure of the stranger in contemporary society, Ahmed explains that

Fetishism involves the displacement of social relations of labour *through the transformation of objects into figures*. What is at stake is the 'cutting off' of figures from the social and material relations which over-determine their existence, and the consequent perception that such figures have a 'life of their own. Stranger fetishism is a fetishism of figures: *it invests the figure of the*

stranger with a life of its own insofar as it cuts ‘the stranger’ off from the histories of its determination” (6, Ahmed’s emphasis).

Ahmed describes these “stranger” figures as cut off from their histories, but also displaced from her/his labours, which are also historically determined. This is precisely how I read the manipulative and ultimately ‘terrorizing’ desi mentors in *Londonstani*: as figures cut off from the history of their pedagogical labours in the context of the state’s intervention in the democratization of social mobility through public education. As my analysis will elaborate, the evasion of historical contexts of colonialism and racism does not only make characters like Sanjay simple agents of terror; although they are objects of threat, these characters also become models and mentors in the grey economies of survival under neoliberalism.⁵⁶

As I will show in the first section of this chapter, Jas’s British Asian mentors are at once agents of criminality and potential terror, but also important supplements for an education system that can no longer fulfill the promise upward mobility, as it once had in the postwar era. Contrary to Clarke’s conception that identification with Otherness forecloses the futures of British school children, contemporary works such as *Londonstani* represent British youth’s identification with diasporic cultures as a means of improving their current life’s trajectory amid a socioeconomic milieu of precarity and stagnancy. *Londonstani*’s narrator’s intense identification with British Asian peers and mentors — with its exposure to danger and increased white vulnerability — is developed

⁵⁶ Formally, “grey economy” has been defined as the trade and commerce in “goods and services which are perfectly legal in themselves but whose production is hidden from the state and can involve systematic and serial law violation” (Jones and Ram 357). In the case of *Londonstani*, these goods are cell phones.

against a backdrop of the hollowing-out of traditional narratives of the good life, both in the sense of public education's inability to produce the self-improvement and class aspirations it should (at least in accordance with the 1944 Education Act), and in contemporary education's transition from a site that reproduces white British cultural primacy to one that has become, both in population and (to some extent) in curriculum, more ethnically diverse. In Malkani's portrayal of twenty-first century London, the white main character feels limited to a choice between an investment in education, which now perhaps ironically holds the connotation of economic stagnation, or a "designer desi" (Malkani 5) lifestyle of black market trade, high-end consumption, and unchecked socioeconomic aspiration.

In the second section of Chapter Three, I respond to the complexity of figures like Sanjay by charting a critical genealogy behind contemporary narratives of "conversion" in the multicultural space of the twenty-first century British state school. I accomplish this by going back to the early days of the state-funded and universally accessible school as a postwar phenomenon, where the figure of the racialized "education for being" was initially represented as an imported resource from the newly independent colonies. I adapt the term "education for being" from Shona Jackson's "labour for being," which she develops in her book *Creole Indigeneity*. In her analysis of creole culture, Jackson discusses the manner in which black slaves were humanized (in the eyes of intellectuals and policy-makers of the West) through their slave labour in the Caribbean, as this work supported the apparent civilizational advances of white being by generating the capital upon which Western dominance was built. The educators and mentors of colour that I

describe in my genealogical exploration similarly labour in the school for the betterment of white working-class being under the auspices of the British welfare state.

As I move from an analysis of *Londonstani* to the earlier postwar texts, I read a scene in Zadie Smith's twentieth-century-spanning novel *White Teeth* to map the genealogy of colonial labour for being. In the scene that I discuss, Smith elaborates on the history of her young characters' state-funded school as an early twentieth century social and industrial project that attempted to extract emotional labour as well as exploiting the physical labour of colonized Jamaican workers; the project's creator, Sir Glenard, believed that the Jamaicans' supposed emotionality could be made to benefit the moral development of the apparently spiritually lacking white working class. The imperial backstory of Glenard Oaks high school in *White Teeth* demonstrates the manner in which racialized feeling becomes an important commodity that British Empire extracted from its colonies, and particularly for the education and management of the nation's own "problem" classes. Smith's generational reach sets up my analysis for the two historical primary texts of my second section: Beryl Gilroy's memoir of teaching in state schools in the 1950s, *Black Teacher*, and James Clavell's popular 1967 film *To Sir With Love*, which was based on E.R. Braithwaite's 1959 semi-autobiographical novel of the same name. I describe how the above texts represent the position of the postcolonial subject, and in both cases the black schoolteacher, as burdened with the labour of care for white students otherwise forgotten by society, impoverished, and deemed hopeless by other

(white) teachers.⁵⁷ As I will discuss in more detail, the burden of emotional and ontological labour that is performed by Beryl Gilroy in *Black Teacher* or the character Mr. Thackeray in *To Sir* becomes integral to the social projects of Britain's postwar and post-Empire welfare state, and specifically here the state-funded school. Like the black labourers that Jackson describes, “teachers for being” in these texts are granted some acceptance into the fold of the British nation by virtue of their value as *supplements* to state educational projects, but are never wholly incorporated into the communities they support.

By tracing the presence of education for being across the historical divide between the postwar era and the turn of the twenty-first century, I demonstrate how the racialized labour of pedagogy is at once persistent in narratives of democratic state-funded education as a necessary and valuable supplement, but also, in the heightened racially-driven politics of today, transformed — converted, we might say — into narratives of terrorism and terrorist conversion. The transformation of racialized labour in the education system to terrorist threat is another iteration of the racist narrative of competing classed and racialized mobilities that I discussed in Chapter One: not only are students and teachers of colour in the school system represented as a potential threat to white British culture by politicians, media commentators, writers, and other cultural producers (whether as convertors to radical politics and criminality, or as academic competitors);

⁵⁷ Another “black teacher” that I do not discuss but could also be included in this list is the character Dickson in George Lamming's *The Emigrants*, who emigrates from Trinidad to teach in London, and appears to suffer, more than any other character, from the affective and psychological burden placed on him by white characters.

they are also cut off from the histories of colonial labour and recruitment that brought them to the imperial centre in the first place.

As I will discuss further below, I recognize that the genealogy of the diasporic teacher for being does not seamlessly flow from the 1950s texts that I have chosen to the present day. The diasporas from which these literary figures emerge have notably changed in response to the shifting geopolitics of war, economics, new variants of imperialism, different histories of empire, and the waves of immigration they produce. Categorizations of class have also been repositioned over the decades that separate the two eras I discuss here; certainly, the more stable parameters of an industrial working class that are relevant to the postwar period are much more slippery and confusing today, as industry has moved overseas and a growing once-middle-class demographic faces the strange contradictions of having relative privilege whilst drowning in insurmountable debt and unemployment.⁵⁸ However, rather than confusing the generational arc that I'm pursuing here, these differences importantly limn the endurance of colonial structures of the present, and the ways in which the burden of certain kinds of work, and especially the affective work involved in socioeconomic change, remain trenchantly racialized (as well as gendered, as my previous chapter discussed). My chapter is ultimately interested in the historical patterns that writers like Zadie Smith demonstrate repeat over decades.⁵⁹ I thus develop a genealogy of racialized "labour for being" in representations of British

⁵⁸ Angela McRobbie's *Be Creative* and Matthew Johnson's *Precariat* explore the contradiction between markers of cultural capital and the reality of waning economic stability in a late capitalist British context.

⁵⁹ See "White Teeth: A Conversation with Zadie Smith." *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal* (27:1) 2002. Web.

education, and this labour's *conversion* into the appearance of terror in the twenty-first century.⁶⁰ Through my historical trace, I hope to challenge contemporary representations of racially-caused white vulnerability in British education, and the ways these portrayals of interracial conflict are used to mobilize a politics of racism that evades social immobility's overdetermination by neoliberal economic practices and exploitations.

The (Mis)Education of Jason Bartholomew-Cliveden: Londonstani and the Racial Politics of Upward Mobility

Guatam Malkani's *Londonstani* takes place in Hounslow, a suburb of London near Heathrow Airport. The story follows a group of millennial British-South Asian nineteen-year-olds who are retaking their last year of high school, and, more importantly to them, posturing as suburban gangsters by illegally unlocking mobile phones for extra money. As one character describes these self-identified "desi rudeboys" later in the novel, from their "D&G T-shirts" and "designer haircuts," "[c]onspicuous consumption, luxury brands, immediate gratification and nice things" are the primary focus of their lives (Malkani 167). However, the central character and narrator of the novel is only a rudeboy via ethnic identification and performance. Although Malkani himself would argue that even the "real" desi characters are only performing a pastiche of South Asian and American hip hop gangster identities, the narrator Jas is nonetheless distinguished from his friends by the fact that he's white.

If the coming-of-age novel, as a genre, is understood in its most basic sense as a story of education, wherein a young protagonist embarks on a moral or spiritual journey towards individual determination (as well as moving towards, as Franco Moretti notes, the opposing force of social normalcy), then *Londonstani* may be read as a *bildungsroman* of sorts (Moretti 17). However, an important part of Jas’s “development” is not necessarily towards a mature spiritual and moral identity, but instead a new racial identification. Malkani’s character Jas works hard to distance himself from his whiteness, which is perceived as a detriment to achieving social acceptance, girlfriends, or, as the novel develops more slowly, economic success. Throughout most of *Londonstani*, Malkani does not specify his narrator’s racial identity, yet in many ways the reader is led to assume that Jas is of South Asian heritage. The boys Jas spends all of his time with are clearly identified as second-generation British Asians, and most of Jas’ own cultural references include rap music, but also Bollywood film and an intimate knowledge of Sikh and Hindu culture and religious practice. Alongside his friends “Hardjit” — Hardjit’s own interpretation of “Harjit” — Amit, and Ravi, Jas continually dismisses whiteness as lacking a kind of cultural “authenticity,” whether these traits are observable in other white teenagers, in Jas’ parents, or in people of colour deemed by Jas’ group to be “coconuts, Bounty bars, Oreo biscuits, or any other fuckin food that was white on the inside” (Malkani 23). To be “white on the inside” is to be a “sap” (29), “gimpy” (22), “batty” (11), “poncey” (45), and a series of other ableist and homophobic slurs; what the derogatory names convey is that rather than the emotional qualities of bravado, sexual confidence, and aggression that Hardjit and the others register as properly *desi*, whiteness

is synonymous with not only a lack of legitimacy, but a constitutional “softness” as well, much like the white centres of Oreos and Bounty bars. The image of Jas as both soft and vulnerable to the criminal proclivities of the rudeboys also echoes conservative politicians and commentators’ projection of England itself as too ‘soft’ when it comes to the dangers of racialized others. For example, in 2014, British Immigration Minister James Brokenshire declared that “Britain is no soft touch when it comes to illegal immigration,” particularly for those that “try to come to this country neither for protection nor to make a legitimate contribution to our economy” (Brokenshire). In her examination of the discourse of “soft touch Britain,” Ahmed remarks that the nation is not only feminized but also *racialized* “by allowing those who are recognized as racially other to penetrate the surface of the body” (3). In other words, softness makes Britain less white. In a slight shift in this reasoning, the young characters in *Londonstani* present softness as a core condition of whiteness, which opens whiteness up to becoming racialized. Jas’ own “soft touch” and susceptibility to Others may be read, then, as not simply a crisis of national policy, but a crisis of whiteness itself in Britain’s postimperial and globalized condition.

A national crisis of whiteness is presented in the novel as a personal struggle for Jas, whose assessments of the inauthenticity and illegitimacy of white (or “white-on-the-inside”) others are projected onto himself. As Jas narrates the text, his identity is carefully kept from the reader until the novel’s conclusion because Jas’ whiteness is a source of embarrassment; thus, for the reader, white experience is mediated through the affects of shame, inadequacy, and envy. When Jas discusses his nickname (which we later find out is short for “Jason,” and not “Jaswinder”), he also complains of having “one of them extra

long surnames that nobody'd ever pronounce properly," which Jas claims he "in't even gonna tell it to [the reader] it's so fuckin shameful" (24). When Jas' whiteness is fully disclosed at the hospital, where he is recuperating from injuries sustained by getting too embroiled in criminal exploits with his *desi* schoolmates, his "shameful" last name is revealed in an ironic reversal of signifiers of privilege as the very toney-sounding "Bartholomew-Cliveden," not the South Asian surname that the reader is perhaps expecting (314).

Jas not only interprets himself as physically and affectively inferior to his new friends and mentors, but economically as well. All of his friends' family homes have five bedrooms and multi-car garages, and their mothers lavishly entertain their friends and spend their husbands' money on jewellery and clothing. Although Kasim Husain argues that the novel demonstrates an "absence of any obvious economic inequity, as indicated by [Jas and his British Asian friends'] uniformly upper-middle class status" (556), I am more in agreement with Pei-Chen Liao's analysis of Jas' class status in relation to Hardjit and the other rudeboys; Liao argues that the novel inverts the stereotype of migrants as poorer than the white mainstream culture, as it is Jas' father "who needs to work around the clock to make a living in his small shop selling mobile phones" (52) and Jas who is continually admiring the rudeboys' fancy cars, houses, and capitalistic prowess. Jas claims that he "used to think guys like Ravi an Davinder were spoilt havin their own cars

just for driving to sixth form and back. Then, after [he] got tighter with Hardjit an his crew, [he] realized they weren't spoilt, they were just lucky that's all" (Malkani 52).⁶¹

This is not to say that Jas is working-class; his father owns a warehouse rather than being a worker within it, and his home is in the same general suburban area as his British Asian friends. Clearly, Jas and his family are somewhere on the spectrum of middle class. However, as the novel unfolds, we learn that being somewhere vaguely in the middle class in twenty-first century London is neither overly comfortable nor financially stable. "Average" British people are at one point characterized as "[b]urnt-out, underaspiring, underachieving public sector workers" who "listen to Radiohead," "read books" and work "relatively low-paid job[s]" (168). The rather disparaging description of so-called "average" Britons is made by Sanjay, a character introduced partway through the novel by the rudeboys' history teacher Mr. Ashwood. Mr. Ashwood initially makes the introduction to Sanjay, his star pupil-cum-elite London banker, after one of the boys steals his mobile phone; it is Ashwood's hope that this British-Asian man who made his sizeable wealth through (Ashwood believes) an Oxbridge education will inspire Jas' friends to become more scholastically motivated and "socially integrated" (127).

Continuing the education for being that began with Hardjit, Sanjay also takes a special interest in instructing the apparently hapless Jas how to properly live out a "designer desi" lifestyle. Sanjay teaches Jas which bhangra DJs to listen to, what clubs to

⁶¹ Jas's description of his friends' wealth as the product of luck and not hard work or opportunity is an interesting repetition of Perowne's description of his own privileged status based on "luck" in *Saturday* — perhaps an indication of the disavowal of social mobility and meritocracy (whether consciously or not) under the current economic climate of widening class margins and an increasing reliance on inheritance as the criteria for financial comfort and social status.

go to, what restaurants to eat in, and how to impress girls. Most importantly, Sanjay instructs Jas in what he terms “bling bling economics,” a neoliberal social and economic system that is governed by consumerism, self-interest, and a rejection of not only public services and the social “good,” but also the British nation itself. If the rudeboys dabble in the fairly mild crime of unlocking and selling cell phones to youth in their neighbourhood, Sanjay is a whole league above them as a career conman who makes his living by collecting sales taxes from stolen items that he moves across Europe. In this way, Sanjay is a kind of ultra-neoliberal operating outside of the boundaries and interference of the state. Neoliberalism, as David Harvey argues, is a post-1980s form of capitalism that “proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (2). As opposed to previous forms of “liberalism” that purportedly favoured “active state intervention in the economy aimed at benefiting the average person” (Kotz 8), *neoliberalism* translates to markets and individuals liberated from the interventions of the state (8-9). And yet, as Kotz argues, the state is still essential in a neoliberal economy in that it “define[s] and protect[s] private property” and “enforce[s] the contracts that are an essential feature of market exchange” (9).

By contrast, Sanjay’s business ventures do not just move outside of national boundaries in the pursuit of building personal capital; Sanjay, by his own admission, steals from the British government and taxation-based social services to support his luxury lifestyle (Malkani 310). Although neoliberalism can certainly be described as

taking away from public social services to support the bloat of entrepreneurial and managerial classes, Sanjay moves beyond even the traditional classification of neoliberalism in his operation through a black market economy of extra- or even anti-national trade. In this way, Sanjay is well described by Jodi Dean's conceptualization of both the "consumer" and the "criminal" as pathologized characters in present-day neoliberal capitalism. Dean argues that whereas capitalism under the welfare state "produced the symbolic identities of consumers, workers, citizens, and prisoners, neoliberal governmentality relies on the imaginary figures of the consumer and the criminal" (62). These figures, Dean explains, reflect the breakdown of previous disciplinary institutions such as family and state; under neoliberal capitalism, "we now have fluid, hybrid and mobile subjectivities who are undisciplined, who have not internalized specific norms and constraints" (61). The consumer/criminal, as this undisciplined and mobile subject, "is imagined as excessive, extreme, and unregulated. In other words it is imagined as a composite of the neoliberal market" (62). Dean's description of this neoliberal figure is a useful optic with which to view Sanjay, who is presented in *Londonstani* as not only excessive in his desire for wealth but also unbound by family—he loathes his father and the familial expectation of paternal "respect" (298)—community, or nation.

Importantly, the pathologized consumer/criminal becomes a symptom, but also a scapegoat for the irreconcilable nature of neoliberalism's promise via free markets of freedom for all, and its reality of "persistent market failure, structural inequalities, the violence of privatization, and the redistribution of wealth to the 'have mores'" (Dean 55).

Rather than a glaring flaw in the supposed freedom of free markets where everyone can win, the loss of others is pinned to the pathologized excesses of the neoliberal consumer and criminal. As Dean writes, “his [the excessive neoliberal subject’s] monstrosity marks the horror of losing, our inability to account for inevitable contingencies. The neoliberal criminal, then, is outside the domain of calculable risk: we can never be insured against the losses he inflicts upon us” (65). However, in *Londonstani*, this neoliberal criminal, Sanjay, is not only the epitome of neoliberalized crime — his crime is driven by desire for excess, and executed through the use of fluid free-market logic — but he is also racialized as a destructive force against the British nation and the white family. In part, this racialization, coupled with his economic success, categorizes Sanjay as the Asian “model minority” that, as Victor Bascara argues, “paradoxically eliminates minority status and renders formerly concrete difference abstract” (11). Much like the fluidity of identity that Dean uses to characterize neoliberal subjectivity and Malkani himself believes his characters represent, the “model minority” myth of multicultural (and particularly Asian) subjects in the West functions to erase specters of imperialism and racism through foregrounding the nation-state’s apparent commitment to the freedom and equality that allows migrant subjects to succeed. Bascara contends that the racialized model minority inhabits the position of the “abstract citizen-consumer” who is able to “assert their agency through their purchasing power” (11). As I will describe in greater detail further on in this chapter, the model minority, if on the one hand is utilized to celebrate the multicultural freedoms of nations like Britain or the US, is, on the other hand, frequently productive of a re-entrenchment of race and racial divisions when model

minorities are viewed as a threat. Returning to the construction of conflicting mobilities that I detailed in both my Introduction and Chapter One, Britain is portrayed as a nation of opportunity that is *too* susceptible to the movement of migrant Others across its boundaries and, once inside, up its ladders of class status. In these representations, as I have shown in my critique of both *Saturday* and the response to July 7, migrant mobilities are rendered as adversative to the aspirations of the white working classes, who are now (purportedly) becoming obsolete in a society where multiculturalism has taken precedent over their communities and livelihoods. Indeed, in the case of *Londonstani*, Sanjay is readable as a kind of model minority in overdrive: he is represented as a neoliberalized “threatening Other,” ruthless, violent, and via the burning down of Jas’ family business, destructive of white opportunity and inheritance.

My argument that Sanjay inhabits not only the dangers of capitalist excess but also the racially stereotyped figure of the terrorizing and almost vampiric “stranger” is admittedly in contradiction with the author’s stated intentions, as well as other critics’ analyses of the novel. In Malkani’s description of his objectives when writing *Londonstani*, he explains that he wanted to make “the point that the cultural identities the characters choose to embrace and express are less about race and more about tools to be more of a man” (*Mixing* 7); thus for Malkani, excessive consumerism and a cut-throat approach to business is cleansed from any connotations of race. Maria Cristina Paganoni and Roberto Pedretti also claim that the novel “flaunts a notion of identity which is flexible,” and is formed not around ethnicity but on the ability for materialist culture to transcend racial difference (423). Lynda Ng further suggests that the novel does not so

much show us how a capitalistic lifestyle creates flexibility between racial identities, but that *Londonstani* argues that a focus on ethnicity “may be a distraction from a far greater terror — the greed encouraged by rampant capitalism and the conspicuous consumption of a ‘bling bling’ economics” (86). In this argument, it is not Jas’s involvement with the rudeboys that spells his downfall but his corruption and manipulation by Sanjay, who is not a terrorist in a cultural or religious sense, but a terrorist under capitalism.

While I do agree that Malkani attempts to detach race from a materialist youth culture in *Londonstani*, and that neoliberal individualism is a prominent “instigator of terror” in the novel, I also understand the novel as undoing some of Malkani’s own stated intentions. Sanjay not only practices a neoliberal-capitalist ethos of ruthless self-interest and excessive financial gain outside of the social contracts of friendships and family and the regulative presence of the British state, he also manipulates and threatens the life of the main white character, Jas, whose whiteness, as we are reminded throughout *Londonstani* (through Jas’ own admissions of inferiority, but also through the rudeboys’ contempt and mockery of whiteness), makes him vulnerable. Sanjay not only persuades Jas to steal from his father —insulting Jas’ filial duty to his father when Jas protests this scheme, as Sanjay himself has severed all ties to his own family (306) — but also burns down his father’s warehouse as a cover-up for his own illegal activity. Sanjay arguably functions as a figure of what Gargi Battacharyya identifies as the “dangerous brown man,” a figure who, to paraphrase George W. Bush in his 9/11 speech, does not value life, education, or others’ right to practice their own lifestyles or faiths. Of course, in Sanjay’s

case, we might simplify Bush's list things that terrorists do not value to simply "those who do not subscribe to 'bling bling economics.'"

Importantly, the novel's representation of Sanjay as a "dangerous brown man" may seem contradictory to the stereotypical understanding of racialized terror, which involves religious fundamentalism and a hatred of the West, that we have become accustomed to. Sanjay is ethnically Hindu, not Muslim, and moreover does not practice any faith. Sanjay is moreover removed from any of the inter-ethnic or inter-faith conflict and prejudice that occurs in the novel; whereas Hardjit and the other rudeboys are staunchly anti-Muslim, and forbid Jas to pursue a relationship with a Muslim student, Sanjay willingly aids Jas's courtship of this woman (if only to provide blackmail against Jas later on in the novel). However, as a fairly two-dimensional character — all we know about him is that he is an authority on British Asian urban culture, and that he is a destructive and violent "grey economy" criminal — Sanjay is also not unlike the representations of the Muslim head teachers of Birmingham schools in the Operation Trojan Horse investigation. Comparable to Peter Clarke's warning that the Islamic teachers' influence in British schools "limit[s] the life chances" of the students and "render[s] them vulnerable" to pernicious forces, Sanjay is represented as a destructive force in Jas' life, not only leading him further away from his investment in a liberal academic education but literally destroying his (white) family's source of income.

The resonance between Sanjay's "neoliberal terror" with other "dangerous brown" figures of conversion, despite their differences in culture and motive, might suggest that fears and anxieties around such figures have less to do with religious freedoms and the

democratic space of state institutions like the school — which was touted by Clarke as the rationale for Operation Trojan Horse itself — and more to do with racism and a fear of the loss of white ascendancy. Of course, this line of argumentation is complicated by the fact that the author is himself British Asian, and has argued that his intentions for the novel (and in particular, its title) were to refute “right wing reactionaries” and their framing of British Asian communities as the breeding grounds of terror (“About the Novel” 5). Nonetheless, Sanjay’s character articulates many of the actions and qualities that have been assigned to “dangerous brown men” as a subject category of destruction and terror in the West. Moreover, as much as Malkani claims to portray new identities in multicultural urban youth that are based on upward mobility rather than race, the economics of the novel are clearly racialized: whiteness, represented by Ashwood, Jas’ pre-rudeboy identity, and the various “coconuts” mocked in the novel, holds connotations (however ironized) of public service, political consciousness, and the common or social good. By contrast, the novel’s desi characters are often capitalistic, self-serving, violent and destructive of white British youth, families, and even the nation’s economy more broadly. Thus, if Sanjay is represented as a neoliberal terrorist, this portrayal of terrorism in the *Londonstani* does not seem to escape the contemporary “stickiness” of South Asian identity to the figure of the terrorist Other in Western cultural representation; even though Sanjay is “only” a white-collar criminal, and in many ways executes the individualistic ethos of boundless expansion and free trade that the British government has been facilitating and encouraging since the 1970s, he becomes a monstrous “consumer/criminal” who leaves the vulnerable white family’s livelihood in flames.

And yet, if Sanjay and Hardjit both to some extent represent the antithesis of Jas' education and opportunities, Jas perhaps ironically also turns to them for their ability to "improve" him through an alternative education in a "designer desi" identity.

Unsurprisingly, Jas is as good a student of a desi lifestyle as he is of academics, absorbing and regurgitating "lessons" from Hardjit and Sanjay with the same voracity that he used to consume history and literature as an A-level student. This alternative education is often held in contrast to the state education Jas was previously immersed in, and Jas himself is often quick to disparage his own previous investment in getting good grades and taking an interest in his classes. Jas describes his former efforts in scholastic subjects with both disdain and embarrassment, and his racial-economic development with his own perceived self-improvement. In a scene where the rudeboys harass a man deemed a "coconut" in his car, Jas ruminates on his own social progress: "I looked out the car again to see if I could see any a them saps. See how far I'd come. Weren't none around though, must've all been in lessons" (23). Contrasted with perhaps more typical understandings of self-development through an academic education, Jas confidently asserts to the reader that his identification with the British Asian rudeboys, who are high school dropouts and petty criminals, has gotten him a lot further in life than sitting in a classroom ever could.

Undeniably, in keeping with the stereotypical ways that Sanjay and Hardjit are represented, the education that Jas receives is a rather dubious one. Part of Jas's identification with the desi urban subculture of his friends involves a hardening of his previous "soft" values and social consciousness into a general relationship with the world of competitiveness and violence. For example, Jas continually chastises himself when he

displays the depth of his historical knowledge or makes reference to “poncey” canonical literature like “*Lord of the Flies*,” as such cultural examples and displays of academic learning are ridiculed and marginalized by the rudeboys (9). Although the rudeboys are rarely granted a political consciousness in the novel by the author (as I will discuss shortly, their anti-racism is often represented as misguided), their rejection of the pillars of a traditional British education might gesture towards a resistance above and beyond a lack of discipline and general misconduct. Hardjit and the other rudeboys’ contempt for their British state school curriculum may be influenced by the fact that this curriculum has little to offer outside of a very white-British and colonial narrative of subjects such as history and literature. One Ofsted study in 2000 reported that a majority of black students felt that their schools lacked an “understanding of their feelings about ethnicity, colour and racism” (Maylor and Read 45); a 2006 report from the agency *Global and Anti-Racist Perspectives* (one of the many organizations critiquing the lack of diversity within British state curriculum) found that education boards “did not provide teachers with appropriate support to teach history that would be relevant to the identities of pupils from minority ethnic groups” (Maylor and Read 47).⁶² In more recent amendments to the curriculum under Michael Gove (the Secretary of State for Education 2010-2014), the Department of Education altered the history curriculum to focus upon an understanding of how “people’s lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world” as a “coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the

⁶² Multicultural education reform can be traced back to the late 1970s, when the Labour government at the time did a series of reports and recommendations on “the role of education in producing social exclusion” of African-Caribbean students in state schools (Warmington 78).

present day” (Department of Education 2014). These curriculum reforms have come under scrutiny by many commentators and experts as a “nationalist modus operandi” with a “tokenistic” inclusion of Black and Asian histories (Institute of Race Relations 2013). Interestingly, *Lord of the Flies* remains on the list of approved literature for the British secondary school curriculum, alongside texts by Shakespeare, Dickens, Orwell and Doyle (Flood and Adams). Only two novels on this rather Leavisite list are by authors of colour, which not only indicates the ongoing presence of colonialist ideologies within public institutions like the school, but also makes *Londonstani’s* British-Asian teens’ lack of enthusiasm for a white colonial education perhaps more understandable.

Nevertheless, white culture and even a white-centred education are represented in the novel as ultimately rational and anti-oppressive in their teachings, despite the suppression of histories that challenge English benevolence and its exclusion of identities and ideas that are very much a part of a diverse British social landscape. This is made explicit in Jas’s descriptions of his own affective and cultural training in becoming *desi*, which involves the use of more violent and oppressive language. Jas claims that if he had a say, he

wouldn’t decide that the proper word for a deep an dickless poncey sap is a gay batty boy or that the proper word for women is bitches. That shit ain’t right. I know what other poncey words like homophobic and misogynist mean an I know that shit ain’t right. But what am I s’posed to do bout it? (46)

Thus Jas identifies the rudeboys’ misogyny and homophobia as something he knows is wrong, but must learn to participate in in order to shed his white cultural identity.

Developing a theory of what she calls “dangerous brown men,” Gargi Battacharyya argues through her text of the same name that Western racism and Empire are built upon an image of white morality versus racialized — and particularly, as Battacharyya notes, South Asian and Middle Eastern — intolerance, especially towards women and queer-identified people. Wendy Brown has also explored how attitudes toward sexism and homophobia “articulate identity and difference, belonging and marginality, and civilization and barbarism” (Brown 10). Although Brown and Battacharyya’s analyses center on the social dominance of white empire, this is inverted in Malkani’s novel: Jas’s whiteness, with its represented values of tolerance and progressive politics, becomes minoritized and repressed. Thus, despite the fact that Malkani himself grew up in a predominantly South Asian suburb of London and states that his novel represents the way that contemporary urban youth cultures celebrate diversity and multiculturalism, *Londonstani* for the most part divides racial identities, associating whiteness with beleaguered democratic social values and intellectual interests, and South Asian-ness with expanding consumerism, misogyny, homophobia, and violence — a characterization that rearticulates racist discourses of white tolerance and its threatened status under the imposition of racialized others.

In keeping with this discourse of dangerous otherness, violence is indeed a crucial part of the lessons that Hardjit and the other rudeboys deliver: at the beginning of the novel, the reader is introduced to the rudeboys during the beating of a white classmate, apparently for calling Hardjit a “Paki.” During this beating, Jas explains to the reader that Hardjit “always knew exactly how to tell others that it just weren’t right to describe all

desi boys as Pakis. Regarding it as some kind a civic duty to educate others in this basic social etiquette, he continued kickin the white kid in the face [...]” (4) Of course, the “education” through physical violence that Hardjit enacts on the white student Daniel is clear foreshadowing for Jas’ own painful lesson at the end of the novel, where he is beaten either by his friends or Sanjay’s henchmen (he’s not sure which) (317). Moreover, once the rudeboys leave Daniel after assaulting him, Daniel accuses Jas of knowing that he did not in fact say anything to Hardjit, which complicates any anti-racist righteousness or rational motives from Hardjit’s supposedly “educative” actions. Although the rationale for Hardjit’s violence and his motives in general for maintaining a “hard” identity could very well be in response to the racism both he and his family have experienced in Britain, whether in terms of overt violence or systemic racism (for example, in the educational curriculum), the novel seems to obscure racism as an explanation for the rudeboys’ hypermasculinity. Instead, ethnicity and masculinity are emphasized by Malkani as a *choice* that the British Asian youth in the novel make (“About the Book” 5), which not only elides histories of colonialism and racism, but also works to reify “the persistence of racism within the cultural politics of neoliberal Britain” by repeating stereotypes of violent and intolerant racialized Others (Husain 556).⁶³

Although ultimately no less violent, the mentorship that Sanjay gives the boys, and especially Jas, is quite different from the rudeboys’ “improvement” of Jas. Instead of

⁶³ Malkani also notes in his “About the Book” section at the end of *Londonstani* that the hyper-masculinity of the desi rudeboys is also, in part, a reaction against the stereotype of Indian boys as “mummy’s boys” (9). For more on stereotypes of South Asian masculinity, see Virinder S. Karla’s “Between Emasculation and Hyper Masculinity: Theorizing British South Asian Masculinities” (2009).

focusing on small-time crime, flexing muscles, and getting into schoolyard fights, Sanjay is instructive on the hyper-capitalistic success and individualism that he is so proficient at. In one of his many didactic monologues, Sanjay states,

In other countries they joke about how British people don't want to be better than the next guy because supposedly it's vulgar or something. Only the royal family are allowed to be blinger than the average. And as every statistician will tell you, the average moves slower than a civil servant's clapped-out car. (170)

This interpretation of the British class system and its purported sanctions against excessive consumption is contrasted with what Sanjay terms “bling-bling economics,” a neoliberal social and economic system that is governed by consumerism and self-interest, and is propelled by an “urban youth culture.” Sanjay claims that unlike the other youth movements such “punks” or “hippies,” Sanjay states “you won't one day wake up and say, I know, I want to be less comfortable, less well off, less sexually attractive and healthy” (171) — all attributes he connects to the “rise of bling” (161) Urban youth culture is a subculture that “worships affluence,” and (according to Sanjay) is steadily “becoming mainstream” (164).

Sanjay's description of a “rise of bling” resonates with Sally Tomlinson's description of late capitalist Britain as a “‘nation state’ giving way to a ‘market state’”; this transition is marked by the market state's philosophy that “the nation state's investment in the ‘people’ through welfare and other public services restricts opportunities for the most productive workers” (6). The British market state is also described by Tomlinson as

[A] post-welfare society [...]where a work ethic and competition in education and the labour market dominate. It is also a society in which there is a restructuring or removal of welfare benefits on the grounds that excessive welfare provision leads to economic inefficiency. Individuals in post-welfare market societies are instructed to ‘learn to compete’ in education and the job market, both for their own economic futures and also to improve the competitiveness of the national economy. (6)

Both the welfare and post-welfare society are represented in *Londonstani*: the former represented by the decrepit public school that Jas and the rudeboys attend and the ideals of the history teacher Mr. Ashwood — who is not only scoffed at by the rudeboys but also represents, as I will explain below, traditional forms of cultural capital and power — and the latter heralded by Sanjay’s monologue on the “rise of bling” and the dismissal of the relevance of a traditional education.⁶⁴ The move towards a neoliberal youth culture of “bling” is stressed as a choice one makes between the “average” path of attempting to find social mobility through education, or a desire to accumulate wealth that exists in black markets outside of the regulatory systems of communities, nations, or even continents, as Sanjay reveals about his own illegal tax-evading business endeavours across Europe. Whether or not the author himself subscribes to the latter camp of anti-public service and anti-education, the failure of the public school system, at least in a neoliberal economy, persistently surfaces in the novel. Any references made to Jas’

⁶⁴ Sanjay contends that if it is useful at all, an education is only salient as a means of networking for future finance market endeavours.

school represent it as shabby, cramped, and arcane. In the novel's opening scene, where Hardjit is beating another white boy for apparently using the slur "Paki," Jas describes being

tuned into the creaking a these mini goalposts Hardjit'd hung his Schott bomber jacket over. You could tell from the creaking that they'd rusted an were meant to be used inside the school sports hall rather than stuck out here opposite the dustbin and traffic cone that made up the other goal. (8)

The rusting equipment in the clearly underfunded school where this beating takes place is of course contrasted with Hardjit's expensive brand-name leather jacket that is carelessly hung from it (not to mention the luxurious private gym the boys attend after school). The school is also described by Jas as sounding "more like a mental hospital than a school" (10). In a later scene, when Mr. Ashwood brings Jas, Hardjit, Ravi and Amit into his office to be disciplined, the office is so cramped and cluttered that the chairs had sawn-off armrests to fit "between the desk and the filing cabinet that'd been dented so many times" (115). Ashwood's office, like the rest of the school, and even the old car that his public servant's salary can afford him, is described in accordance with the novel's overall portrayal of public services and public space as derelict, antiquated, and overshadowed by the consumer goods and lifestyles of Malkani's "designer desi" lifestyle. When considered together, these contrasting descriptions between Sanjay and the rudeboys' luxury lifestyles and the now-decrepit welfare-state school (with its apparently underpaid teaching staff, judging by Mr. Ashwood's office and car) imply a structural shift in the driving forces behind socially mobility past and present. If, at one time, universal access

to state education broadened the class margins for relative financial comfort and respectable social status, it has now given way to a new order of cutthroat competition and white-collar criminality that excessively rewards few to the detriment (and even endangerment) of those who “lose.”

Of course, Mr. Ashwood is himself portrayed as a caricature of the values that the boys’ unofficial cultural pedagogue, Sanjay, identifies with the antiquated past of British social and economic society. Driving a tiny hatchback, voting Labour, and taking an overly enthusiastic interest in the hearts and minds of his disaffected students, Mr. Ashwood is described as passionate “bout the government an politics an the big media dudes an what’d gone wrong with the world an education policies an all that kinda shit” (123). And yet, the monologue Ashwood delivers on the benefits of education and his active interest in the reform of Jas and the rudeboys suggests that he is, despite the boys’ mockery, perhaps better seen as not a minority voice of die-hard leftism but an avatar of liberalist education reform and culture-driven nationalist hegemony that has been recurrent since the late nineteenth century. Ashwood’s desire “to turn [the rudeboys] into great people — future news editors, director-generals of the BBC, Cabinet members, even a prime minister” (126) echoes the liberalist polemics of Victorian critic and writer Matthew Arnold, whose nativism and pro-imperialist politics I have already discussed at length in Chapter One’s analysis of his poem “Dover Beach” in the context of McEwan’s *Saturday*. In *Londonstani*, Ashwood’s stated dreams of developing his students into “great people” echoes Arnold’s arguments for the use of culture in the pursuit of “national greatness.” This greatness, Arnold argues, “is a spiritual condition worthy to excite love,

interest, and admiration” in both English citizens, but also nations elsewhere that might look to England as an example of a great culture (19) — a chauvinistic sentiment which provided justification for England’s imperialist presence across the globe (Arnold was, for example, against Irish self governance).⁶⁵ In Arnold’s esteem, such greatness is not measured by wealth and industry but by a general interest in intellectual pursuits and a desire to improve humanity (24-25).

In the text that I have been quoting (*Culture and Anarchy*) as well as in other essays by Arnold (for example, “The Nadir of Liberalism”), the lawless and self-serving spirit of his high Victorian age, evidenced by the mass public demonstrations and riots of 1867 in both London and in Ireland, could be resolved by a more focused attention to the cultural pursuit of this “greatness” and its cultivation via education. Arnold, among other titles, was a school inspector and strong proponent of education as a means of shaping the child of all classes into an engaged and “tactful” citizen with a strong possession of intellectual creativity and curiosity (Russell 122). This liberal tradition of investing in a national culture of greatness through education was also a strong basis of postwar welfare state’s reform of state education. As I have earlier discussed with regards to the 1944 Education Act, these mid-century reforms were motivated by a desire to harness “national talent”; in William Beveridge’s Report of 1942, he stated that “few countries will stand comparison with Britain” as a result of welfare state services like education and healthcare (Section 3). Tony Blair might be a more recent real-life example of neo-Arnoldian cultural politics, with his programmatic push for the instilment of middle class

⁶⁵ C.f. James Walter Caufield, *Overcoming Matthew Arnold: Ethics in Culture and Criticism* (2012).

values in disaffected youth via community programs, volunteer work, and an attempted revitalization of youth involvement in libraries, museums and art galleries.⁶⁶

The presence of an Arnoldian vision of nationalist culture and education within Tony Blair's neoliberal government speaks to the manner in which "Third Way" governance attempts to blend right-wing economics (inherited from Margaret Thatcher) with left-wing social policies (the legacy of the welfare state). As Edward Ashbee argues, the social initiatives of contemporary neoliberal leaders (Ashbee also uses David Cameron's "Big Society" as his reference point) are not antithetical to a market state society; communitarian projects and government planning, in promoting a culture of cultural engagement and "self help," are utilized to replace state provision with voluntary labour through what Ashbee calls "social recapitalization" (101). We might then see Ashwood as not only representative of welfare-state sentiments of upward mobility via education (a sentimentality that, interestingly, Blair has been accused of) and a proponent of Arnoldian cultural greatness, but also as a vector into the neoliberal social and economic values that Sanjay provides the rudeboys.⁶⁷ Ashwood's concern for the rehabilitation of the truant rudeboys and their seemingly unmotivated lifestyles into more functional citizens can be read as a form of social recapitalization, particularly as Ashwood literally delegates Sanjay to take on the voluntary labour of educating the boys in the benefits of a well-rounded liberal arts education.

⁶⁶ For a more thorough critique of Blair's youth projects, see Phil Mizen, "The Best Days of Your Life? Youth, Policy and Blair's New Labour" (*Critical Social Policy* 23.4).

⁶⁷ Deborah Orr calls Blair's youth policies "self-regarding [...] misty-eyed arguments" that are more reflective of what's possible within a "stable, loving working-class upbringing 40 years ago." *The Guardian* 24 August 2011.

Of course, Sanjay does not, as Ashwood had hoped, implement this civic-minded mentorship. These two characters' perceptions on the possibilities of education and the telos of self-improvement and aspirations are notably opposing: Ashwood's dreams of civic engagement are contrasted with Sanjay's notably more individualistic, overtly exploitative and extra-national capitalistic schemes. In this way, Sanjay performs the "self-help" narratives of racialized uplift that Paul Gilroy argues have become characteristic of neoliberal capitalism's "rising tide of interest in 'minority ethnic' communities" ("We Got to" 23). Tracing the roots of this narrative to Victorian self-help manuals and their relationship to abolition, Gilroy argues that twenty-first century neoliberalism elides its racist and precarity-inducing effects elsewhere by celebrating "corporate diversity" and migrant hustler narratives as evidence of its freedoms and "revised hierarchies" (24). Lastly, the contrast between Ashwood and Sanjay's approach to education is also apparent in Ashwood's rationale for his decision to pass on the task of "rudeboy reform" from himself onto Sanjay. Ashwood states that "last I heard from him [Sanjay], he was earning a packet and had just bought himself a flash sports car — you'd like him" (Malkani 131). Ashwood thus here seems to acknowledge that his own lack of "flash" objects (such as his ancient hatchback) and academic lifestyle was not enough to make an impression on the boys, an admission that perhaps also signals a more subconscious "handing over" of a previous form of liberalism to the multiculturalized entrepreneurial neoliberalism that is evident in Sanjay.

Thus, *Londonstani* tells a story about the last days of the welfare state and public services like education as it is submerged by a more powerful and power-hungry free-

market economy dictated by “bling.” The two-dimensional and figural nature of Malkani’s characters maps well onto the key figures that are drawn up by the media and the British government in reports and arguments around contemporary issues of austerity, globalization, and neoliberal economic policy: the dangerous and resource-draining immigrant (whether as a “job-stealing” migrant or as invasive offshore investor who has no attachment or allegiance to the nation-state) and the struggling white middle and working-class family.⁶⁸ Mr. Ashwood is of course also an archetypal figure: as an older man, a teacher, and social liberalist, Ashwood represents, to some extent, the “old ways” of social mobility and the cultivation of the functional and well-rounded citizen that were provided by public education.⁶⁹ In keeping with the theme of masculinity in this novel, the more socialized model of success and self-making through state-funded secondary education (and its attachment to the civic good) that Ashwood symbolizes is represented in the present as wholly impotent in a new order of neoliberalism and globalization represented by Sanjay, and other aspirational British Asians in Malkani’s Hounslow.

In consideration of this transition between two economic and cultural orders that are represented in this novel and the mentorship that appears to guide each, Sanjay and

⁶⁸ This reading of race and neoliberalism in *Londonstani* is in contrast with Sarah Brouillette’s analysis of the novel in *Literature and the Creative Economy*. Brouillette reads *Londonstani*’s success as, at least in part, a reflection of New Labour’s programmatic approach to “diversity” in cultural production as “servicing [its] social inclusion agenda” (118). As Brouillette notes, much like the rudeboys’ business plan of “filling the gap in the market” with their illegal mobile phone scheme, *Londonstani* likewise fills a gap in the British “black and minority ethnicity” market for literature (136). While I find Brouillette’s analysis of the incorporation of race and diversity into lucrative economies of cultural authenticity compelling, I am more interested in how *Londonstani*’s particular conjunction of race and neoliberalism reiterates problematic depictions of white victimhood amongst affluent ethnic communities in a contemporary climate of austerity and economic competitiveness.

⁶⁹ See Bruce Robbins’ analysis of the mentor as a key figure in depictions of the welfare state in *Upward Mobility and the Common Good* (particularly the chapter “The Fairy Godmother”).

Hardjit are as much educators in a more lucrative model of class aspiration and personal development for Jas as they are thugs and corporate gangsters. Thinking of Ng's hypothesis that "capitalism [is] the true instigator of terror" in Malkani's novel, I wonder if there is more to Jas's apparent vulnerability as his rationale for embracing an education in "bling-bling economics" (162). What does this education, however disastrous, say about formal schooling's ability to follow through on narratives of upward mobility and citizen-formation for the youth it educates? If this narrative was the guiding principle of the state school's reformation in the postwar welfare state, do texts like *Londonstani* make the argument that a new socioeconomic world order has divorced a traditional education from the aspirations of a stable career and middle-class lifestyle? And, what significance might there be in the representation of characters of colour as catalysts in the transformation of white vulnerability to the possibility of self-improvement, however dubious (and is the cause of this vulnerability more than simply a product of predatory and dangerous figures of terror)? While the influence that both Sanjay and Hardjit have over Jas' life seem to lead him only to criminality and, ultimately, a hospital bed with broken bones and a concussion, the effect of their presence on Jas' own development is rendered more complexly in *Londonstani* than the contemporary representations of the opportunity-draining "terrorist teacher" in media spectacles such as the Operation Trojan Horse scandal. Although there is much to be cynical about in Sanjay's statement that one has "the option of listening to Radiohead, taking a relatively low-paid job and reading lots of books that make you feel like you've got a wealthy mind or soul or whatever" (168) or engaging in the excessive and seemingly immoral lifestyle of "bling bling economics,"

there is also perhaps some truth in the lack of real options for a comfortable or meaningful (never mind affluent) life. Malkani's representation of the underfunded state school and limited life opportunities for those who work in "average" jobs — such as hauling luggage for wealthier classes at Heathrow airport (Malkani 26) — echoes the crisis of social mobility currently happening in the UK. Alan Milburn, chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, argues that an insecure labour market has "eroded the old optimism that doing well at school was a passport to a decent job and a better life" (Milburn qtd. in Wigmore); similarly, in his critique of higher education and social mobility, vice-chancellor Keith Burnett argues that owing to the lack of opportunity available to younger generations, "widening access to higher education has not had the desired effect. Universities appear to be consolidating social immobility, rather than overcoming it" (Burnett).

At the same time that the novel's representation of Jas's vulnerability may be correlated to state education's inability to deliver on the promise of upward mobility, this vulnerable identity may also be akin to what Paul Gilroy has called "postcolonial melancholia": the unmoored loss of the British Empire and the inability to face the atrocities of British colonialism (*Postcolonial 2*). As a youth of the twenty-first century, Jas of course did not grow up within the transition from Empire to colonial independence; yet, his conflicted and melancholic relationship to his own white identity, and his critical distance from Hardjit and the rudeboys' vitriol against racism, suggest that he is nonetheless shaped by the unease and self-protectiveness of a melancholic postcolonial British society. A key example of this is when Jas states:

Mr. Ashwood had taught us about the bloody partition of India and Pakistan during History lessons. What we didn't learn, though, was how some people who weren't even born when it happened or awake during History lessons remembered the bloodshed better than the people who were. (Malkani 48)

Jas, who is here referring to his Sikh and Hindu friends' hatred of their Muslim rivals, witnesses their conflict as a decontextualized repetition of previous inter-ethnic violence. Interestingly, this History lesson and Jas's knowledge of Partition seem devoid of British involvement in this bloodshed, an omission that is definitive of Gilroy's melancholic society unable to reconcile its own violent histories.

Jas's melancholia, and the gap in his awareness between present day anti-racism with the racism of both the past and the present, is also reflective of the discourse of white male marginalization in British state schools. The language of threat, bewilderment and failure that pervades discussions of white British masculinity, and particularly young people in school — deemed “sad lads” by Linda McDowell (1) — stems from the large body of statistics that points to the performance of this demographic as underperforming when compared to children from other populations. While there is little surprise, and only a little outcry, over the fact that upper-class white boys are doing better in school, have lower rates of suicide, and the ability to procure employment more easily than white boys of lower economic brackets (1), what seems to draw particular feelings of shock and concern is that previous “failure” groups, particularly ethnic “minorities,” are also doing better in these areas (and often even better than aforementioned white boys of the more

affluent classes).⁷⁰ Thus a discourse of over-achieving “model minorities” come to be compared to and even blamed for the comparative decline of white British students’ academics; for example, the parents’ of these “model” children are accused of being, for example, able to pay for private tutoring (Harris), and the children themselves as characterized as excelling because they are too focused on economic success and “lack in creativity” (Yeh 1199). Other researchers have pointed to the manner in which traditionally masculine positions — particularly in industry — have declined or even vanished completely in the UK, thus removing a sense of belonging or aspiration for many young white men who would traditionally pursue these careers (McDowell 2). Of course, in *Londonstani*, Jas outperforms many of his peers in academics. Yet, given *Londonstani*’s reflection of the bleak prospects in the twenty-first century for those seeking upward mobility through education, not to mention the melancholic state of postcolonial white British identity, Jas can be seen as a white millennial “sad lad” whose skills and knowledge are no longer salient in a contemporary world of broadening economic inequality and withdrawing state support. Contrary to Malkani’s argument that Jas’s identity reflects the fluidity of a post-class and post-racial twenty-first century (“About the Book” 5), my analysis makes it apparent that his decision to abandon his traditional educational path for instruction in a “designer desi” lifestyle is arguably founded on both anxieties over the future of economic stability and the melancholia of whiteness within a globalized market state after Empire.

⁷⁰ There are an overwhelming number of sources on these statistics. See, for example, Linda McDowell (70; 2003), David M. Arnot (1996), as well as numerous news articles and government reports.

And yet, if Sanjay is not only a kind of extreme (or perhaps *extremist*) neoliberal model minority but also, as I have argued, a teacher for the novel's narrator, it is important not to lose sight of the manner in which Sanjay was inducted into his position as Jas's mentor. Although, on the one hand, Ashwood's delegation of Sanjay as the official educator of Jas and the rudeboys signals the transition from liberal to neoliberal capitalism, on the other, Ashwood's assumption that Sanjay would connect better with the boys is made based on Sanjay's race just as much as Sanjay's "flash" lifestyle. The specificity of Sanjay's ethnic identity is an important point for Ashwood, who assures the rudeboys that "he's Indian, don't worry" (Malkani 131) as a rationale for their mentorship by Sanjay. In the spirit of Arnoldian nationalist chauvinism, Sanjay is the external subject that Arnold envisions is influenced by and admires British society, and is able to educate others in its "greatness." While we know that this is not how Sanjay's relationship to the boys plays out, his installment by Ashwood as a supplement to a liberal British education is what I would like to explore more deeply, particularly as this supportive status is designated to Sanjay on account of Ashwood's construction of the relatability of his racial identity.

I borrow the term "supplement" from Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1976), where it is used by Derrida to describe the hierarchical relationship between concepts or ideas. The supplement's position is to aid what is original or natural; it is a "signifier," not a "signified" (315). The subordinated position of the supplement is made clear in Derrida's explanation of this construct as

[c]ompensatory [*suppléant*] and vicarious [...] an adjunct, a subaltern instance which *takes-(the)-place* [*tient-lieu*]. As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. (145)

In the context of my analysis of *Londonstani*, Sanjay’s labour as a teacher for being is enlisted to the service of a British state education, which figures as the original “presence” in this Derridean equation. Despite Sanjay’s powerful financial position, education, and respected social status, he is nonetheless recruited to “fill a void” in the state’s ability to foster social mobility.

As I will outline in the next section of this chapter, the teacher or mentor of colour as a supplement to state education has an important genealogy in representations on British schools of the welfare state (and its contemporary permutations). In part, my inspiration for developing a literary history of racialized, supplementary labour in British education derives from a short vignette in Zadie Smith’s novel, *White Teeth* (2000). Much like the schools analyzed by state investigators in “Operation Trojan Horse,” the school is also represented as a site of conversion (among other modes of intercultural exchange) in *White Teeth*. On the grounds of the fictional council estate high school Glenard Oaks, the teenaged Millat is lured by the pamphlets of an Islamic-nationalist high school student named Hirfan. However, this portrayal of a seemingly foreign and extremist “miseducation” in the school is complicated by a variety of factors, including the radical group’s initials, which form the conspicuously white-sounding acronym “KEVIN,” and

Millat's own interest in extremism as based on his love of American mafia films (Smith 308).

More important, however, is the mediation of this narrative of dangerous otherness within British schools by Smith's historicization of this and other cross-cultural interactions that occur in the lives of her late-twentieth century characters. As Smith narrates, Millat's high school, in its original Victorian form, was a workhouse founded by the self-fashioned "educational philanthropist" Sir Edmund Flecker Glenard. In her tongue-in-cheek description of this so-called philanthropy, Smith describes Glenard as a successful colonialist who had made a "pretty sum farming tobacco in Jamaica, or rather overseeing great tracts of land where tobacco was being farmed." At the end of his colonial career, Glenard decided to yoke together what he deemed to be the two opposing aspects of Jamaican and English cultural behaviour: the devotion to spirituality and the devotion to work. Glenard opines, "one was impressed by the Jamaican's faith but despairing of his work ethic and education. Vice versa, one admired the Englishman's work ethic and education but despaired of his poorly kept faith" (305). Wanting to bring these two supposedly innate cultural elements together, Glenard donates forty thousand pounds to a project in London that would have Jamaicans working

side by side with Englishmen packaging Sir Edmund's cigarettes and taking general instruction from the Englishmen in the evening [...] and on Sundays, continued Sir Edmund, the Jamaicans were to take the Englishmen to church and show them what worship should look like (306).

Owing to the costly task of shipping heavy tobacco across the Atlantic, Glenard's educative mission became too expensive to sustain; the project was neglected and then abandoned after Glenard's death. When the factory was shut down, the "Englishmen left to go to jobs elsewhere" and the Jamaican workers, now possessing an English education but no food or means to make money (as no one would hire them) died of hunger, were incarcerated "for the petty crimes hunger prompts," or "crept awkwardly into the East End and the English working class" (307).

While the exploitation of physical labour and the apathy towards the well-being of colonial workers is representative of histories of colonization more generally, what I would like to tease out as another appropriated colonial resource in Glenard's "vision" is the naturalization of racialized feeling. While the Jamaican subjects that Glenard sent overseas to London were still required to manually work in the imperialist production of cigarettes, the central desired product of this "philanthropic" project was the harvesting and circulation of colonial spiritualism and emotionality. In this story, Glenard perceives the expression of feeling in Jamaican churches as "natural" to the very composition of Jamaican subjectivity, and thus a "natural resource" that is accessible to colonial projects. Moreover, this scheme is also about the management of the white British working classes, as it is for their spiritual and emotional "betterment" that colonized feeling is commoditized and circulated. Although in Glenard's imagined symbiosis of manual and emotional spirituality, the white labourers must instruct their Jamaican counterparts on British history (and other subjects), the burden of hardship and economic inequality

ultimately weighs heaviest on the colonial migrants, who have no other means to fall back on in the prejudiced metropole once Glenard's project dies with him.

The history of the Glenard Oak school and the temporal narrative of *White Teeth* more generally tells a story about the shifting politics around a racialized pedagogy of feeling, from the demand for the spiritual instruction of the imported colonial worker to the contemporary dangers of the violent other, who converts vulnerable British youth (both white and nonwhite) to radical religious or criminal activity. Importantly, Smith reminds us that this colonial history is the pillar of modern liberal and state-funded institutions. In *White Teeth*, it is perhaps no accident that Glenard Oak transitioned from being an imperialist labour project to a state school in 1963, an undertaking that Smith wryly calls "Brave New Council Estate." As Jordanna Bailkin argues in *The Afterlife of Empire*, the colonial spirit

reemerged not only in the postcolony, but also in the metropole, cloaked in the avalanche of paper that accompanied welfare, and hidden in welfare's own contentiously evolving systems of classification. (15)

Following Bailkin's observations on colonialism's slide into welfare practices and philosophies after the Second World War, I argue in this chapter that the work of making this transition to an accessible education and "improving" the working classes was reliant on the labour relations and hierarchies formed within the colonies; these colonial labour practices did not disappear, but were rather carried into an education system (among other institutions of the welfare state) that was ultimately no less hierarchical or exploitative.

Continuing this backward genealogical trace, the following section will show how *Londonstani* and *White Teeth*, as Bildungsroman, can also be categorized within a narrower definition of the genre. This historical subgenre, I will argue, is formed through the rockiness of the British state's promise of upward mobility to its less-privileged classes through traditional means of education, and its reliance on colonized subjects to perform the emotional work of the spiritual and moral education, with its pathway to social mobility, that epitomizes the genre. If *Londonstani* appears to offer little in the way of moral or spiritual development, a look beyond the present to the postwar era, in which education as a working and middle class right emerged alongside the movement of colonial workers to the British metropole, will offer a different view of Sanjay and Hardjit as "dangerous brown men." This historicization will not only offer a shift in historical period, but also in point of view: rather than centring the position of the "vulnerable white youth" as protagonist, the texts I analyze below tell the story of the education of white youth from the perspective of the racialized educators "for being."

Black Consolation: Postwar Histories of a Racialized Education for Being

As I indicated in this chapter's introduction, the postwar era is an important period in which to historicize *Londonstani* and its portrayal of the failure of the welfare-state school, because it marks the inception of its contemporary organization and mission through the Education Act of 1944. Education was particularly important to the postwar concept of democratic access to social mobility because it was supposed to foster the development of youth into citizens who had the credentials and training to access the jobs

and lifestyle typically associated with the middle to upper class. Typically, the process of social mobility through education is understood as “working” in the apparent heyday of the welfare state, and as being eroded over time as the transition to a market economy not only degraded the funding for public schools, but also dissolved most people’s ability to attain permanent and well-paying jobs. For example, in Wendy Brown’s 2015 analysis of the decline of democratic education in the US, she writes that in the mid-century, education “was the door through which descendants of workers, immigrants and slaves entered onto the main stage of the society to whose wings they were historically consigned.” Brown goes on to focus on the failings of education as a means of securing socio-economic stability in the present, as schooling becomes more privatized, public funding becomes more scarce, and unemployment and tuition debt rise (138).

Although Brown writes primarily about education in the US, the comparison she describes between mid-century opportunity and its dissolution in the twenty-first has also been made of British education’s transition from welfare state public access and upward mobility to the privatization and socioeconomic stagnancy of the present. As Bruce Robbins describes, the British postwar welfare state saw “increased funding for higher education” and “universal free schooling” (194), which might be contrasted with contemporary examples of privatization, such as the Academies Act of 2010. This Act allowed schools to convert to “academies,” institutions that could operate more independently outside of the regulations of the Department of Education with regards to school administrative decisions, staff wages, curriculum, and funding. As Neville Harris argues of twenty-first-century educational policy in the UK, the

neo-liberal ideas based around encouragement of entrepreneurial endeavor (even where originating in community initiative), as much as harnessing consumer demand, emphasizes the radical anti-statist character to the reforms, with private interests marginalizing the public domain. (543)

This ongoing comparison between democratic postwar education and its production of class mobility with the increasingly corporatized and unequal character of the education of today certainly holds a good deal of truth. For example, the many sociological studies published in the postwar era found that free access to education did in fact improve working-class children's chances of becoming more affluent and pursuing middle-class careers. In Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden's famous 1962 study of working-class children in grammar schools (before they became comprehensive), they found that many of the children that *stayed* in school went on to become teachers or office workers, or, for the women, marry "privately educated men" (245). The reforms to education in the mid-twentieth century, including the 1944 Education Act, certainly did much to change many social or economic classed people's lives.

Yet, despite Jackson and Marsden's praise for the impact of state-funded education, another aspect of working-class education and social mobility that Jackson and Marsden wished to capture was "the feel of the individual human situations behind the figures," a feeling that was often anything but positive. Owing to the fact that many of the teachers viewed working-class children in their classrooms as an "entrance of the barbarians" (218), that the children's homes were filled with poverty and anxiety unlike that experienced by their middle-class peers, and that even council schools were modeled

after a model of education “shaped by restrictive social pressures” (221), many children often fared poorly or dropped out of school altogether. As anywhere from half to over three quarters of working-class children with above-average intelligence dropped out of school at age 16, Jackson and Marsden were quick to assert that the problem was not the students themselves, per se, but more with the bad feelings that were if not created, than at least neglected, by the school system (218). Feeling bad (or being made to feel bad), for all of the reasons I’ve listed above, was simply a part of working-class life regardless of the apparent golden goose of state-funded education.

I am particularly interested in the shadow of negative affect that Jackson and Marsden read “behind the figures,” as feelings of poverty, anxiety, inferiority and social difference become defining features in two key postwar texts, *To Sir, With Love* and *Black Teacher*. Both texts relate the colonial migrant educator’s experience in the state schools of the metropole, where the burden of feelings such as anxiety, despair, and anger are passed on to the Guyanese ex-pats Mr. Thackeray in *To Sir* and Beryl Gilroy in *Black Teacher*. Through the emotional labours of these teachers, the apparently hopeless and unteachable students they are given charge of are able to develop and grow, or, at the very least, find some solace and support for the hardships of their lives. As my analysis will show, the racialized teachers for being become important supplements for the historically specific genre of working-class *bildungsroman* in the welfare state. Their status as adjunctive is evident in the manner in which Thackeray and Gilroy are at once necessary and marginalized. The absence of teachers of colour in white-authored postwar working class *bildungsroman* is further testament to this marginalization. And yet, as *Black*

Teacher and *To Sir* show, without this imported labour, it becomes hard to imagine what the state school itself could possibly accomplish for the working-class children it has been charged with educating, and their supposedly brighter futures.

In *To Sir, With Love*, a 1967 film adaptation of the autobiographical novel by E.R. Braithwaite, Sidney Poitier plays Mark Thackeray, an engineer from then-British Guiana who, owing to racism in the job market, can only get work as a teacher in an East London school with a bad reputation. Given a particularly unruly class that the other white teachers refuse to touch, Thackeray is at first the subject of disrespectful pranks and antics by his white working-class students. However, through Thackeray's insistence on treating his "problem" students like adults, he gains the respect of his class. Giving up much of the academic subjects of the curriculum, Thackeray transforms the classroom into a space for the pedagogy of culture and citizenship; as one newspaper's twenty-first century synopsis of the film suggests, Poitier's character "swaps curriculum and textbook for human contact" (*The Daily Telegraph*). Thus, the important work that Mr. Thackeray provides is not so much the textbook-learning of school academics or even the forms of "good conduct" that the education system normally provides, such as work ethic and compliance to authority. Instead, Thackeray expounds the feeling-work of good subjecthood that has been previously denied these white working-class students, who represent a class — both in terms of their grouping in school but also in the wider hierarchy of society — that is seen by other teachers as without hope or ability. As one fellow teacher remarks, the students of North Quay will "happily be part of the great London unwashed: illiterate, smelly, and quite content" (Clavell).

Although Thackeray's own thorough education in the colonies — part of Britain's "civilizing" mission in its territories — is perhaps what qualifies him to teach at North Quay, it would seem that the more important preparation for Thackeray's success with his students is his experience of the less "philanthropic" elements of imperialism — that is, prejudice, oppression, and poverty. In *To Sir*, Thackeray is depicted as having the ability to develop emotional bonds and understanding between himself and his students on the grounds that they can *identify* with him, and presumably not with white teachers from middle-class backgrounds. Although the students initially assume that Thackeray is a "toff" or upper class, when they challenge him Thackeray references his own experiences of discrimination and hardship in colonial Guiana. For example, when the class doesn't believe that Thackeray comes from a poor family because he "talks posh," Thackeray not only insists that he "waited tables" and "washed dishes," but also demonstrates the patois that he used to speak in Guiana and compares it to the students' own working-class vernacular. In another instance, one student asks Thackeray if he had ever been "broke," to which he responds by saying "many, many, many times." After this revelation, another student remarks, "well, Sir, you're like us, but you ain't, I mean, you're not. It's kinda scary, but nice. You know what I mean, don't you" (Clavell)? Although, as the student's observation shows, Thackeray's racial difference is still a source of distancing and discomfort for his students not unlike Ahmed's "stranger figure," his story is presented as a great success of moral and affective mentorship. As some reviews of this film are quick to celebrate, *To Sir, With Love* presents a world where the experience of hardship matters more than race, and connections can be meaningfully formed through these trials of

poverty and disadvantage in postwar London. This emphasis within the film clearly anticipates the neoliberal identities that Malkani attempts to portray in *Londonstani*, where subject categories are apparently fluid and the rigidity of previous definitions of race and class no longer matter. It also demonstrates the idea that one's station in life is dictated by affect, both in the sense of "behaving respectably," which Thackeray tries to instil in his students, but also in terms of affective connection, or empathy and warmth. As "proof" of this, the students' behaviour in *To Sir* drastically improves with Thackeray's more empathetic approach to his teaching. Moreover, providing care and attention to this otherwise neglected group of East London white students is apparently so natural to Thackeray that he finds his "calling" as a state school-teacher.

However, we are already given a clue as to the way in which Thackeray's ethnicity plays into his construction as a "natural" teacher for the students of North Quay in the film poster's tagline, which reads: "a story as fresh as the girls in their minis...and as cool as their teacher had to be" (my emphasis, Clavell). "Coolness," as bell hooks (among other scholars, writers, and artists) points out, is culturally produced (and capitalized upon) as being innate to blackness. In *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (2004), hooks points to histories of the envy of black culture (and particularly here, masculinity) by white Americans dating back to the 1950s and 60s, commenting that "[b]lack males had access to the 'cool' white men longed for" (13). Racialized "coolness" is, among other things, inflected with concepts of authenticity and emotionality. Writing about jazz and subculture in mid-twentieth century England, Alan Sinfield notes that during this time, "well-spoken British boys [became] jazz enthusiasts

and performers” because “jazz became associated with existentialism, intellectuals, and bohemians” (184). The connection between jazz and existentialism was made — with the help of French intellectuals like Sartre — because jazz, and black culture more generally, conveyed for white British youth the “possibility of pure being” (Sartre qtd. in Sinfield 184). This possibility is further reflected in Norman Mailer’s essentialist argument that “in [the black jazz musician’s] music he gave voice to the character and quality of his existence, to his rage and infinite variations of joy, lust, languor, growl, cramp, pinch, scream and despair of his orgasm” (Mailer qtd. in Sinfield 185). As Sinfield and hooks both identify, sexuality is at the core of white envy of black masculine cool, and Mailer’s description is no exception. Yet, what is also deeply intertwined with characterizations of jazz and of black culture is the expression of pain. In Mailer’s *The White Negro*, he writes that jazz players “cramp,” “scream,” and “despair” because “the Negro [sic] has the simplest of alternatives: live a life of constant humility or ever-threatening danger” (185).

Thus, the “coolness” of Thackeray that the film poster’s tagline promises is as much about the “enviableness” of black masculinity as it is about the inextricability of blackness with hardship, which makes Thackeray supposedly able to “relate” to his students in ways that middle-class white teachers simply cannot. This relationship, as I suggested above, seems to be mutual: at the end of the film, Thackeray receives a letter offering him employment as an engineer — a position he is more trained and experienced in — that he eventually tears up. As one teacher, played by Geoffrey Bayldon, tells Thackeray: “Anybody can be an engineer, but teaching this mob is...well, I wish I had your gift” (Clavell). The “gift” becomes a rationale for not only Thackeray’s rejection of

a more lucrative — and likely less emotionally trying — job offer, but also for the uneven burden of managing the feelings and behaviours of his pupils, not to mention the dismissive attitudes of his racist coworkers. As Thackeray is a character in a film, we obviously cannot “know” his internal feelings. Yet, through his continued care and concern for these otherwise neglected and given-up on white East London teenagers, Thackeray not only manages discriminatory acts, but also demonstrates what sociologist Arlie Hochschild calls “deep acting,” or the exhortation of feelings in the goal of resilience and survival (33).

While it is not my intention to detract from the real pedagogical capabilities demonstrated by Poitier’s character in this film, the subtext behind the “gift” of “getting through” to an otherwise angry, undisciplined, and prejudiced group of white working-class youth is readable as a form of racialized emotional labour. Emotional labour, as I have already defined in my Introduction and Chapter Two, is “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (Hochschild 7). In *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild observes emotion-work as an undercompensated aspect of forms of employment typically reserved for women and lower classes, such that emotional labour “comes to seem normal, even built into personality rather than inherent in the kinds of exchange that low-status people commonly enter into” (85). However, absent from Hochschild’s — and subsequent labour studies scholars’ — description of typical

“emotional labourers” is the social positioning of racialized subjects as inherently empathetic and emotionally available.⁷¹

Although she does not use the term “emotional labour,” Beryl Gilroy’s *Black Teacher* theorizes the racialization of this form of work: a teacher of many years and the first black headmaster in England, Gilroy analyzes the way in which her positioning as a woman of colour in a deeply racist, colonial society made her vulnerable to affective exploitation. In her early years in England, prejudice initially prevents Gilroy from working in her vocation of teaching, and so she makes a living dressmaking in a workroom and doing domestic labour for an aging British aristocrat. In the latter position in the home of the wealthy, ex-colonial “Lady Anne,” Gilroy records the relation of superiority and paternalism that Anne maintains with Gilroy at the same time that she relies upon her service and company in the home. Indeed, Lady Anne, who comes from a long family line of “dedicated service to sovereign and Empire,” draws upon Gilroy’s presence as a means of colonial nostalgia. In her time as a dedicated “philanthropist” and educator under the project of Englishness in the colonies, Lady Anne offered “brief spells of culture-oriented employment to students” in her “blood and bones” commitment to Empire building (31). In postwar London, Lady Anne (who specifically advertises for a “student” to be her maid) seizes Gilroy’s presence in her house as an opportunity to continue her mission as educator in British culture, colonial history, and civility to a

⁷¹ As Kiran Mirchandani points out in her article “Challenging Racial Silences in Studies of Emotion Work: Contributions from Anti-Racist Feminist Theory” (2003), “little or no attention has been paid to the racialized dimensions of emotional work” (721). Although research on this topic has grown since 2003, race and emotional labour still does not have a research archive proportionate to the level in which affect work and gender has, especially in recent years, expanded as a subject.

“native” audience. In Lady Anne’s actions and attitude, Gilroy’s position in the home is constructed as a privileged pupil rather than necessary labourer, and although Gilroy seems to enjoy Lady Anne’s company, it is clear that her position in the colonialist matron’s home is expanded beyond the affective boundaries of domestic service. Gilroy is, to Lady Anne, a flesh and blood mnemonic for a receding imperial history and imperial affectivity.

In spite of her training and qualifications, Gilroy’s relationship to her own pupils when she finally receives a job as a teacher in London is never one of the cool, distant and revered mentor that Lady Anne is able to cultivate with her students in the British-occupied Caribbean, and, later, with Gilroy. When she is finally employed within the school system, Gilroy is assigned to schools in impoverished neighbourhoods with poor reputations. As a woman of colour, Gilroy is classed in such a way that denies her a straightforward recognition of authority either from her working-class students or from other (white) teachers. Long and horrifying is the list of white co-workers, neighbours, and parents’ racist and violent acts against Gilroy, from throwing ice at her in the streets (159) to refusing to let her touch them, even if it is to remove a wasp (64). Despite the intensity of their prejudice against her, Gilroy frequently documents the sympathy and confidence that white working-class people in her community simultaneously expect from her. Children frequently open up to Gilroy about the traumas of their life in a way they do to no other teacher, and much of Gilroy’s job is devoted to helping these white working-class children manage the rough terrain of absent or abusive parents, abject poverty, derelict living conditions and the loss of loved ones. It is perhaps true that being privy to

the issues of children outside of the classroom is part of the territory for anyone who works with them, and yet, as Gilroy observes, she is often told by her colleagues that she (like the character Mr. Thackeray that I have described above) has a “common bond” and special connection with the students that they do not have (156)— a “connection” that often justifies Gilroy’s uneven burden of confidence and counsel for others. In one example, a particularly impoverished mother of two troubled students approaches Gilroy and confesses to her that her children are the product of rape by her father. When Gilroy suggests seeking counseling from one of the nuns at the school, the woman tells her “I can’t [...] I never talk to no one. But you’re different. I’ve ’eard say that black people don’t ’arp too much on the rights and wrongs of things” (75). In *Black Teacher*, Gilroy theorizes the conception of black subjecthood as somehow naturally gifted with understanding and the ability to “relate” to white injury. Gilroy explains:

She had come to me, of course, for an additional reason. I was to have this happen to me over and over again. There comes a time when the terribly handicapped or grievously hurt person, with nowhere else to go, seeks the final resort of black consolation. Deep down what they're saying is, ‘Now I'm on your level. When it comes to suffering and humiliation, you've been there before me. Help me, please, fellow-traveller’ (76).

This definition of “black consolation” reveals the paradox of racialized emotional labour, as black subjects are at the same time constructed as “naturally” gifted with service-oriented attitudes as these empathic abilities are identified as the product of “humiliation” and “suffering.” Gilroy sheds light on the ways in which white identification with

(assumed) black or migrant pain *sustains* whiteness by virtue of its commoditization of histories of racism. In Marx's theory of capitalist production, labourers become alienated because the ruling classes control the system of production, thus making workers only an instrument in this process. The thing that is produced, the commodity, is also a site of alienation, as the worker has no hand in the design of the commodity, and the effort and exploitation of labour is moreover cleansed from the commodity itself. Thus, like the theory of commodity production, emotional labour is exploitatively alienated from its labourer, whose pain and suffering is necessary to the production of the commodity (affective understanding, or the experience of pain), but completely erased within the commodity itself. Returning to Ahmed's application of Marxist theories of production to emotion, her argument that "[i]t is not so much emotions that are erased, as if they already were there, but the processes of production or the 'making' of emotions" (*Politics of Emotions* 11) captures well the naturalization of racialized hardship as a useful commodity for the welfare state's intervention within poor white communities in *Black Teacher*.

In *Black Teacher* and *To Sir*, the figure of the black teacher, in producing the commodity of emotional empathy and care, is in turn commoditized as feelings of pain and suffering are bound to the racialized body. However, the emotional relationality identified by Gilroy's "black consolation" reveals an interesting difference: in the affective-economic model of the education system, history itself is not erased as it is with Ahmed's example of the vilified "asylum seeker" in European countries (Ahmed *Cultural Politics* 47), but is instead necessary to produce the ideal affective worker: "when it

comes to suffering and humiliation, you've been there before me" (Gilroy 76). Of course, this historical recognition only goes so far. The racist conditions that produce hardship for Gilroy in England are thus clearly part of white cultural consciousness, yet the knowledge of racism, slavery, and colonization does not necessarily alter the attitudes and actions of Gilroy's white community. At work here is thus not only the assumption that black subjectivity is defined through feeling, and especially the feelings wrought from traumatic experience, but also that experiences of racism in the form of assault, exclusion, poverty, and psychological abuse (and etc.) are productive of a valuable resource for whites.

In *Black Teacher*, social class importantly modifies how affective connections are made and emotional labour is exerted in colonial British society. In her encounters with the upper classes, Gilroy notes the ways in which emotional distance is socially constructed, even if emotional resources (in Lady Anne's case, a sympathetic ear and vessel for her memories of "philanthropy" and colonial role as educator) are used and even relied upon. Gilroy goes on to say that "into her chosen 'children' [Lady Anne] could instil whatever she chose" (32), a passage that not only stresses Lady Anne's undisputed autonomy and freedom of *choice* but also the uni-directionality of her pedagogical energies. This affective comportment and relationship to colonized and lower-class others is, according to Gilroy, "what 'class' meant: a certain assurance of self, of position and of the direction which attitude and energy must take" (33). To be white and of a certain social class is to "instil" education in others; to be a "black teacher" is to not only teach but to *receive* the feelings of others. While Gilroy was relied upon by Lady Anne as a sounding-board and placeholder for her remembered relationships with

colonized “pupils” in the height of imperialism, Gilroy’s position as a black body within the much different milieu of white working-class schools and neighbourhoods demands an equally exploitative but perhaps more historically and socially complex set of emotional exchanges.

One perhaps simplified hypothesis regarding Gilroy and Mr. Thackeray’s position within state schools as emotional and moral teacher-labourers is that the colonial (or postcolonial) worker is burdened with the uneven promises and realities of the welfare state and its narrative of a democratic access to the good life through education. Teachers by definition aid in the development of their students within various subfields of knowledge and skills, and certainly the expectation of a more democratic access to education was that, through schooling, the working classes could be developed not only academically but also socially and economically. What texts like *Black Teacher* and *To Sir* show us is the other side of this structure of development: the exploitation of black consolation, and, on the part of the students, the negative feelings that researchers Jackson and Marsden aimed to uncover in their ethnographic description of working-class children in a post-Education Act system. If social mobility was what was happening — or supposed to be happening — on the surface of state education, beneath was a yawning gap between the goal of a universal middle class and the affective and material experience of being poor, forgotten, and alienated. As supposed fellow travellers in hardship and oppression, Gilroy and the character Mr. Thackeray bear the burden of guiding their students across this expansive emotional divide. And yet, by virtue of the commoditization of histories of racism that is plainly laid out by Gilroy, the fellow-

travelling that black teachers and their white working-class students share down pathways of oppression and suffering fork at what Gilroy identifies a “direction of energy” that is sustained by social hierarchies. Although identification is encouraged between Gilroy and Mr. Thackeray and the white children they teach, it remains unidirectional in its emotional and interpretive energies, and — as evidenced by the lack of support from white teaching staff and the general xenophobia of the communities in which Gilroy and Thackeray work and live — without solidarity.

Social Mobility vs. Survival: History, Trauma, and The Racialized Labour of ‘Cruel Optimism’

In both postwar and contemporary texts, identification occurs between the white working classes or, in Jas’ case, precariously middle-class subjects and their teachers or mentors of colour. This identification, as all the texts seem to pinpoint, allows for an important education outside of the academic curriculum. The skills and qualities showcased as necessary for living — at least, living within social worlds dictated by precarity and insecurity — are represented as inherent within blackness or Asian-ness. And yet, the representation of how these teachers for being arrived at these qualities differs between the postwar and contemporary texts, as does their tendency to register, in binary terms, as either benign or dangerous. Where racialized “labour for being” is read as *care* in the 1950s and 60s, it is conversely framed in the contemporary moment as *conversion*, white endangerment, and destruction. In postwar texts we see an uplifting portrayal of much-needed emotional, spiritual, and moral education; in the twenty-first

century, it is represented as a “miseducation” that, in Peter Clarke’s words, eliminates the possibility for the good life. This shift may be indicative of Britain’s own changing relationship with the rest of the world, and the image the nation is projecting against the backdrop of the global politics of a particular era. The desirable “black teachers” of the 1950s exist in a time period where Britain was producing the optics, however hollow, of a kind of globalized family with its ex-colonies in the effort to maintain some control and dominance after Empire.⁷² The transition from a colonial and more rigidly classed Britain to a postimperial welfare state that was invested in the philanthropic mission of universal access to the good life required the labour of its previously colonized subjects to not only support the appearance of social and global democratic integration, but also to continue to exist as pillars of care and service within British institutions — not unlike Zadie Smith’s portrayal of Sir Glenard’s dependence on the spiritual-affective instruction his Jamaican workers could provide. As Bailkin argues,

[...] the transnational and the local continued to be intertwined in welfare’s history after 1945, as the decline of formal imperialism provoked new demands for the governance and care of Britain’s diverse populations. The welfare state was caught up in the worldwide transformations that accompanied independence. It was not a ‘pure’ domestic creation, but rather an entity shaped by global forces ranging from the experiences and expectations that individual migrants brought

⁷² This is not to ignore the very real ways in which Caribbean migrants were criminalized and rendered as threatening in the postwar era, nor that Mr. Thackeray could not possibly be a migrant from India instead of Guiana. Indeed, the labour of care for whites was an expectation of all colonized populations, not just those from the Caribbean. For more on the optics of a cohesive multi-racial Commonwealth “family,” see Drummond Shields’ *The British Commonwealth; A Family of Peoples* (1952).

with them from their countries of origin to the construction of new legal regimes in Africa and Asia. (3)

If the experience of colonization was to shape the nation's understandings of working-class needs and their management in the transition into the welfare state, experience was also utilized as a necessary pillar in an education system that could not manage the despair and anger of a population still suffering from the weight of poverty and social division. These negative feelings and material realities were not, as Jackson and Marsden discovered, magic-wanded away by the imposition of state education; the experience of racism thus became a useful commodity for the management of the working classes, although never acknowledged or integrated within the curriculum as such. For the postwar figure of the consoling teacher from the colonies, his or her history of oppression was as valuable an educational tool as pencils or books; and yet, the very same history of oppression that marks their value to the project of welfare-state education also maintains their marginality. Thus, empire — and its institutional extensions past its official end — frames colonial subjects as either subjects of education or supplements to education.

The optics of a familial commonwealth, along with the strength of the welfare state, have long since dropped away in the twenty-first century context of *Londonstani*. British cultural politics of the late-twentieth and twenty-first century appear much more invested in both reinstating imperialist activity and distancing the nation from its previous colonies and any relationships and responsibilities associated with it. With Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" manifesto against an immigrant "takeover" in 1968 and Thatcher's Falkland Wars in the 1980s as signal points of this national attitude toward the

international community and migrants at home, 9/11 in the United States and the July 7th, 2005 London bombings, as well as the “War on Terror” against Muslim nations that the UK participated in, might be more directly linked to the cultural attitudes of “dangerous brown men” that inflect conversion narratives in texts like *Londonstani*. Demographic ratios have also clearly changed between texts of the 1950s and those of a more contemporary moment: whereas Beryl Gilroy and Mr. Thatcher were depicted as solitary figures of colour within a broader white community, *Londonstani*, as well as other millennial examples such as Abi Morgan’s *White Girl* and Tanika Gupta’s *White Boy*, depict their white characters as minorities in non-white ethnic communities. And yet, despite this shift in the framing of teachers for being in the twenty-first century as more dangerous than caring (as *Londonstani* does) or that diasporic teachers are no longer an isolated minority, these characters still remain as adjunct supports in service to the development and improvement of white being. This suggests that despite these large shifts in population, policy, and wider public attitudes between the postwar period and the twenty-first century, the manner in which the colonization of racialized feeling and the expectation of educators and mentors of colour to perform “black consolation” has not.

Future research might flesh out this analysis of the turn from care to conversion in state education by delving more deeply into the beginning of neoliberalism’s succession over a socialized economic system in the 1980s and the changes in the British state’s rhetoric towards postcolonial migrants. However, even with this somewhat temporally truncated analytical movement between the mid-twentieth century and the twenty-first, it is clear that the trope of the diasporic educator for being continues today. What changes,

along with the representation of “care” and the global politics that I have briefly noted above, is that the histories and experiences that are clearly acknowledged as an important commodity in postwar texts (however violent and unsettling) no longer seem to be valorized today. While histories of British brutality and violent racism have of course long been repressed in the interest of maintaining an image of Britain as rational and humane, if such histories were even tentatively acknowledged in postwar narratives of teachers or being, the contemporary representations of these supplementary teachers of colour that I have thus far discussed are notably divorced from their own histories of racism and suffering. This contemporary suppression may well be articulated through the growing racism against “dangerous brown men” that reached its crisis point after 9/11 and July 7, but also through the later stages of a transition to neoliberalism and the erosion of social mobility via democratic access to education. The racialized figures imbued with a supposedly exceptional ability to instil development and improvement in themselves and others in the state’s institutionalization of care (via the welfare state) now take the fall for its absence. It is conspicuous that the figures of terror and conversion in *Londonstani* are also represented as ultra-neoliberal, an alignment that seems outside of stereotypical representations of terrorist figures as anti-capitalist and anti-Western. While this might simply reveal, as Ng argues, that capitalism is the “far greater terror” in contemporary Britain (69), it is perhaps instead symptomatic of the persistent placement of capitalism’s failures onto the shoulders of “post” or neo-colonial subjects. If capitalism is the true source of terror in *Londonstani*, it is not fully acknowledged, but rather sublimated into its characters of colour.

This slippage between ruthless neoliberalism and racialized terrorism in *Londonstani* does, however, get (briefly) contextualized and politicized in a scene where Jas is talking economics with his friend Ravi's father, who argues:

Why to pay the government? For what? So they can dig up roads and give me traffic jam? So they can pay dole money to lazy people who call my family Pakis when they come into my brother's shop to spend their dole money on beer and cigarettes? They get lung cancer and I pay for their hospital. [...] Education? Fat lump of good that is, our beitas keep failing the A-levels.

For Ravi's father, taxes only uphold an expensive economic system that supports an unproductive class of poor whites that harass him and his family members, who are themselves hard-working business owners. Although this characterization of the working classes is a prejudiced stereotype in itself, Ravi's father importantly links contemporary experiences of racism by migrants and their subsequent generations in Britain to the experience of colonialism. Ravi's father goes on to state that "as far as [he's] concerned, [South Asian-Britons] pay taxes to *Her Majesty's* Inland Revenue," which makes him think of "the Crown," "British royalty" and "India" (182). As Ravi's father's statement elucidates, there is a continuous arc between the exploitation and expectations of British Imperialism to the present: postcolonial migrants are still burdened with the labour of managing the anger and frustrations of those oppressed by Britain's economic class system. This is not to say that I agree with Ravi's father's characterization of people "on the dole," or of welfare more generally. I do read this scene, though, as an important resistance to the "designer desi" lifestyle portrayed in *Londonstani*, and the way in which

such portrayals evade the burden of care that is still placed on even the most threatening and destructive of Malkani's diasporic characters. For, despite Sanjay's clear intent for his own profitable gains, he nonetheless also takes on the responsibility of educating Jas in the new grammar of social mobility under the precarity of British late capitalism.

Thus, what my historicization of racialized "labour for white being" brings forward is the connection between the burden of this labour with the "cruel optimism" of upward mobility through state education — or, more specifically, how the cruelty of optimistic narratives of the good life are mediated and managed by the labour of Britain's colonized subjects, and not the care of the state itself. Through my reading of postwar texts alongside *Londonstani*, it becomes clear that despite the apparent shift from Afro-Caribbean to South Asian diaspora as the focus of these narratives, both postwar and millennial texts are connected by a genealogy of labour for white being, a labour that moreover must necessarily supplement — at the same time that it exposes — the shortcomings of projects of social mobility through education as they emerged through (and beyond) the welfare state.

Conclusion: Reading Brexit

Across the three chapters of this dissertation, I have developed an archive of texts that both reflect and challenge a particular social and historical narrative that has been constructed and sustained in popular British media, British politics, and public opinion. This narrative, which has intensified in recent years, approaches the contemporary crisis of social mobility and working-class decline as a racial problem. According to its racist logic, the expansion of multicultural Britain, particularly after postwar decolonization, was responsible for the loss of the good life for the white working class. As the postwar era marks a watershed moment in the public imaginary for both the initiation of a contemporary globalized Britain and a time when the working classes “never had it so good,” the mid-twentieth century is often brought forward in xenophobic political discourse as a time of supposed white-race unity and British meritocracy, and as a period of reflection on “what went wrong” in British immigration policy. The present-day restoration of Enoch Powell as prophetic in his inflammatory diatribes against multiculturalism and immigration in the 1960s — such as Denys Blakeway’s documentary, *Rivers of Blood* — crystallizes the nostalgic construction of Britain as an innately white and cohesive nation that has been corrupted by lax immigration policies and “soft touch” (Johnston) responses to asylum seeking and terrorism. In nativist retellings of history, the white working classes frequently appear as figural victims of immigration; the decline of upward mobility in a supposed British meritocracy is held in

contrast to the mobilities of migrants who enter the country and purportedly receive more support and care from the state than do its white and poor.

In response to the causatively intertwined narrative of migrant mobilities and class stagnation, I have developed an alternate dialogue between the present day and the postwar by examining social mobility as an affective genre in representations of race and class. By exploring literary and cinematic representations of urban mobilities, the home, and the school across urban space more generally, my doctoral project has demonstrated the ways in which social mobility materializes as a social relationship and a “structure of feeling” (Williams 128) that shapes the connections between white working-class and migrant communities in more nuanced ways than has been portrayed by British media and politicians. This is not to say that literature does not reiterate these oversimplifying narratives of conflict; Ian McEwan’s *Saturday*, for example, evades multitudinous perspectives on issues of class, neo-imperialism and multiculturalism through the singular and persuasive consciousness of its white bourgeois narrator. However, my readings of the more diverse array of texts that I have gathered here endeavour to displace white and privileged representations of social mobility and immigration that have largely dominated public opinion and memory in Britain since the postwar period. Just as each chapter covered different spaces that have featured in debates over working-class victimization and rights of access, the texts that I explored in each chapter also provided different viewpoints, experiences, and genres of writing from the “dominant” white voice that I critique in Chapter One (represented by Henry Perowne in *Saturday* and the political

framing of July 7) to the white working-class perspectives explored in Chapter Two, and the postcolonial migrant's perspective present in Chapter Three.

Despite the range in temporality, spatiality, and perspective among the texts I have chosen, when brought together they show how social mobility as a structure of feeling produces intimacy as well as conflict. These intimacies at times bear the legacy of colonial relationships of structural racism, as racialized subjects are discriminated against at the same time that they are brought into complex economies of cosmopolitanism and “classiness,” as I argued in Chapter Two, and exploited in unequal relationships of emotion and care-work, as I demonstrated in Chapter Three. My analysis of social mobility as a structure of feeling in literature and film reveals that, in its labours and expectations, the affective genre of social mobility since the postwar era has tended to shore up the continuation and preservation of white nationalism through the marginalization and continued exploitation of racialized subjects. And yet, although the contemporary rhetorical construct of social mobility and its apparent endangerment as a result of immigration and multiculturalist state policy utilizes the white working class as its litmus test and ultimate victim, I argue that the narrative of the good (white) life is ultimately always already inaccessible and even detrimental to many of the subjects who labour towards it, whether in the so-called affluent days of the postwar era or in the present. As each chapter has revealed, the preservation of an ideologically constructed white nationhood through the working-class desire for the good life elides the fact that the working classes in Britain as a social and economic community are not a uniformly or historically white population; moreover, as a diverse community, the working classes of

all racial and national backgrounds struggle under market-state capitalism. In the texts I analyze, social mobility as an affective genre is not textured by the emotions of hope and excitement, as might be expected, but disappointment, desperation, and feelings of insecurity and vulnerability. As my final chapter in particular has shown, racialized subjects unevenly manage anxiety, despair, and anger. Thus, despite the shared condition of life under capitalism and neoliberalism that the texts I have discussed ultimately respond to, subjects and communities defined as racially other bear the ultimate burden of these conditions, both materially and emotionally.

The coordinates of the affective genre of social mobility that I have laid out became particularly clear in the referendum for the British exit of the European Union on June 23rd 2016. Those who voted to leave the EU won by a margin of only 3.8 percent (BBC); in the aftermath, Prime Minister David Cameron stepped down from his role as he was himself a strong supporter of remaining in the EU, and Theresa May became the new Prime Minister. Among the supporters for the Leave campaign was Michael Gove, a Conservative politician and Secretary of State for Justice from 2015-2016; Boris Johnson, the former mayor of London; and Nigel Farage, the leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party — a party notorious for its nativist leanings. Although there were a wide number of reasons cited for the success of the “Leave” campaign, many were built upon the return to a nostalgic construction of white Englishness that was insulated from the changes of a globalized world. The desire to remove Britain from the expansion and flow of people, objects, and capital constitutive of globalization is ironic and hypocritical given the fact that many of the crises and instabilities that a move such as Brexit seeks to

evade are ones that Britain itself had an active role in, from colonialism and military efforts in the Middle East, to economic inequality across the EU that left several nations — particularly in the east and south — in a state of emergency. Although the UK was one of the most fortunate and privileged nations in the EU (being outside the Eurozone and maintaining its own currency, Britain retained much of its fiscal freedoms even when it was a part of the EU, and enjoyed a prolonged period of economic stability) one of the main slogans for the pro-Brexit campaign was “Take Back Control.” On the Leave campaign’s website, this slogan is specified as taking “back” control of national spending and finance, national borders and immigration, and the law. However, as Akwugo Emejulu has argued, what the Leave campaign and its final success “is really about is race” (83). Indeed, even when Leave campaigners weren’t talking about immigration and border control (particularly against both white and non-white asylum seekers), race remained the undercurrent of the conversation.

The scapegoating of race and immigration in the Leave campaign is especially evident in the portrayal of Brexit as a supposed “working class revolt” (Harris). Indeed, it is difficult to read any commentary on Brexit, whether in newspapers or academic websites and publications, that does not contain the phrase “working classes.” In the countless analyses of the Brexit polls and the demographics, the large percentage of working class votes to leave the EU are cited as evidence of the growing political and economic despair in the UK. Of course, this large percentage — 64 percent of working-class voters chose to leave — does not speak to the *number* of voters. In the geographer Laleh Kalili’s essay on race and the Brexit referendum, she notes that there was a far

larger turnout of middle and upper class voters, such that there were three million more middle and upper class votes for Brexit than there were working-class votes (38). What might be overlooked, then, are potential reasons for a lower working-class turnout to vote on the issue itself; perhaps the large amount of people from lower income households who chose not to vote speaks to the lack of faith that political and economic change will happen, inside or out of the EU. As I will discuss shortly, there is good cause for such cynicism, as many of the promises used to whip up Brexit votes are now being backpedalled and renegotiated.⁷³

Regardless of the actual number of working-class voters, Brexit has been made a working-class issue by politicians and the media. For example, the Leave campaign promised what was in essence a return to a robust welfare state, which would benefit lower-income citizens more than anyone else. This claim was most obvious in the Leave campaign's pledge to utilize the money given to the EU — allegedly 350 million pounds a week — for public services such as the National Health Service, housing, and schools (“Why Vote to Leave” 2016). The pro-Brexit platform also generated the myth that separation from the EU would bring the return of social mobility akin to that of an earlier point in the twentieth century — a time before Britain purportedly lost control. This promise was further reinforced by Theresa May's inaugural speech as the post-Brexit Prime Minister, in which she promised that during her leadership, she would “put the

⁷³ For example, Conservative former Defense Minister Liam Fox has stated that “a lot of things were said in advance of this referendum that we might want to think about again” (Peck). One claim that has since been taken back was the pledge to move the 350 million pounds a week paid to the EU to National Health Service (a pledge that was painted on the Leave campaign bus). Politicians that rallied for the Leave vote, including Iain Duncan Smith and Nigel Farage (both of whom were photographed with the bus), have since disowned the claim (Travis).

interests of ordinary, working class Britons first” by rebuilding Britain as a meritocracy (“Britain, the Great Meritocracy” 2016). In the analysis following the Brexit referendum, politicians, journalists, and academics alike pointed to the desire for social mobility as the reason behind the positive vote for leaving the EU. One sociological report stated that

[t]he ‘golden age’ of upward social mobility in the second half of the 20th century saw many people from working class backgrounds end up in middle class jobs.

However, that transformation of the occupational structure has now very much slowed, if not stalled completely. (Phillips qtd. in Jeory)

However, politicians have transformed what is clearly an issue of a growing class inequality under a neoliberal market state that has maintained austerity for the majority of its population while an elite few continue to benefit into an issue of racial conflict and competing mobilities between migrants and the white working class. According to one of the sociologists conducting the study quoted above, social mobility’s stagnation is correlated by many (white) working-class Britons to the rise in immigration (Jeory). As a counterpoint to this generalizing characterization of white working classes, Zadie Smith describes the politics of her white working-class father as “sufficiently open in heart and mind.” Reflecting on the working-class pessimism and fear that has been described as producing the Leave vote, Smith observes through her description of her own father — who maintained his open mind and optimism despite being at the frontlines during the Allied liberation of concentration camps, and later “losing his livelihood” and enduring multiple divorces — that it is important to recognize that white working-class people are not unanimously influenced by the politics of fear and hate (Smith “Optimism and

Despair”). Whether or not Brexit became a political reality through the support of the white working classes, it was undeniably peddled by politicians like Farage and Johnson as a means of getting class mobility moving again by stemming the flow of apparently unbridled immigration.

Brexit and the Leave campaign thus offer perfect examples of the racist narrative that I have sought to describe and critique throughout my dissertation. Under economic austerity and monetarist financial regulations, British society’s most vulnerable — its white and non-white working classes, and, especially, new Britons and refugees — are pitted against one another in a competition that neither can win. This is already clear in the fallout from Brexit, which has already produced a drop in British currency and, predictably, the withdrawal of some of the more extravagant social and economic promises made in Brexit’s campaign, such as the bolstering of health care, universities and housing.⁷⁴ Not only have these pledges been revoked, but existing supports for lower-income households are being dissolved as well, such as the maintenance grant which helped students from working and middle class homes pay for post secondary education (Rayner 1 August 2016). Hate crimes have also risen dramatically since Brexit, enabled by the state-sanctioned polemic against immigrants and refugees.⁷⁵ Although many working-class people did vote for Brexit, it did not produce a working-class revolution, nor a solution to any of the nation’s problems. It is, instead, a triumph of a

⁷⁴ “Brexit Camp Abandons £350m-a-week NHS Funding Pledge,” 10 September 2016, *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/sep/10/brexit-camp-abandons-350-million-pound-nhs-pledge>

⁷⁵ Based on the number of hate crimes reported to the police (which likely does not begin to capture the increase in everyday forms of hate and violence), acts of racist violence arose by almost 2,000 counts (*BBC* 24 November 2016).

right-wing, wealthy and xenophobic dominant class over the nation's racially and economically oppressed. As I have shown with my analysis of texts from the postwar and the present, narratives of racially caused social immobility are, despite their overrepresentation in the media, rarely experienced in the actual lived stories of working-class subjects, white and non-white.

One of the points that I have taken away from my work on this dissertation, and its connection to contemporary British (and global) politics, is the need for a closer examination of how analyses are made, and how knowledge is circulated. The methodology of my dissertation, which is largely an ideology critique, has been appraised by academics in the current trend of new materialism and “thin description” as in need of revision and replacement; according to Heather Love, ideology critique, or simply critique, falls into the problem of reading “literature as if it were social behaviour” (429). In many respects I agree with some of the criticisms of historical and sociological readings of literature, as it perhaps allows us to be, as Karen Barad has argued, too quick to criticize and dismiss a text for its political flaws without committing oneself so a sustained and generous reading at the outset.⁷⁶ My experiences in graduate seminars have exemplified for me these problems with critique, as it is all too easy to wield one's powers of appraisal and censure without real consideration or sensitivity. And yet, there is much that ideological critique has to offer, particularly in this moment of political

⁷⁶ See “Interview with Karen Barad,” *New Materialisms: Cartographies and Interviews*. Ed. Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin. *Open Humanities Press* 2012. For more on this topic (the “critique of critique”), see Bruno Latour, “Why has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern” (2004).

upheaval and social crisis; for example, the need for a different mode of evaluation and interpretation was evident in the lead-up to both Brexit and the American presidential elections, which relied heavily upon empirical data. I say this not only in reference to the rather fantastical claims that both Brexit supporters and Donald Trump (now President) were able to weave so convincingly, but also the general response when both of these radically right-wing platforms were successfully elected.

What is striking about both the EU referendum and the 2016 American presidential election is the shock experienced when both Brexit and Trump were elected. How were voters, commentators, and spectators — not just in the US and Britain, but globally — so confounded by what was happening, right in front of them, all along? On this question, William Davies argues that

In place of facts, we now live in a world of data. Instead of trusted measures and methodologies being used to produce numbers, a dizzying array of numbers is produced by default, to be mined, visualised, analysed and interpreted however we wish. We no longer have stable, ‘factual’ representations of the world, but unprecedented new capacities to sense and monitor what is bubbling up where, who’s feeling what, what’s the general vibe. (25-26)

In the lead-up to Brexit (and the American election), the “data” frequently told us of the unlikelihood of either Brexit or Trump happening — and yet it did, taking “even Leave voters by surprise” (Khalili 38). However, in opposition to Davies’ criticism of contemporary “feeling” as false fact, I maintain that it is not affect itself that is the problem in current political analysis. Rather, it is the means by which feeling is extracted from

data — often hastily, and often interpreted for us by bodies and institutions with particular political alliances, or economic incentives. As we saw with both the Brexit vote and the Trump election, the “vibe” as reflected by data shifted constantly, but did not clearly portray the deep feelings that provided the momentum for such radically right-wing votes.⁷⁷ Similar to Kathleen Paul’s analysis of anti-immigrant attitudes in postwar Britain as issuing “top-down” from elites rather than belonging to the white working classes alone, the racist and nativist feelings that produced Brexit and the election of Trump are arguably more revealing of a larger national affect that is clearly generated by, and benefits, the dominant class.

Just as my readings of literature and film have located alternative narratives of race and class as they are mediated by the pressures and mythologies of social mobility, so too might deeper readings of national affect and national culture tell us alternate, and less reactionary, stories about the everyday lives of migrants and working classes of all ethnic backgrounds. Reading the social politics of our times, whether they emerge in literature, popular media or political spectacle, more deeply (or perhaps “thickly”) might produce a better understanding of not only the feelings and desires that govern the directions large communities like nations move in and towards, but also our relationships to others within them. As Smith’s more qualitative description of her working-class father in “Optimism and Despair” illustrates, it is important to balance the speedy assessments and sociological frameworks imposed on cultural events and communities with the deeper

⁷⁷ See, for example, “Bookies Still Deem Brexit Unlikely,” 2 June 2016, *Market Watch*.
<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/bookies-still-deem-brexite-unlikely-and-for-good-reason-citi-says-2016-06-02>

and more meaningful connections one may have with people and social circumstances “across lines of class, race, and temperament” (Smith). This is not to say that one is more true or real than the other, but rather to posit that the qualitative forms of knowing and relating to the world that Smith engages in by challenging generalizations of working-class populism through her relationship to her father allows for perhaps both a sounder politics and a more generous mode of being in a world that is always and endlessly “overdetermined.” Indeed, as Smith states in her essay’s conclusion, “if novelists know anything it’s that individual citizens are eternally plural” — as are, arguably, communities, classes, and other generic groupings of individuals. A shift in our methods of understanding the world to a practice that endeavours to read the social beyond its surface may give us the optimism, as well as the time and space, to actually make some progressive changes.

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