



Title: Biopolitics, Borders and the Populations of Literary
Space in Two Post-millennial Black British Novels:
Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* and Andrea Levy's *The
Long Song*

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Abstract

This project is an analysis of biopolitics, populations and space in two post-millennial black British novels: Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001) and Andrea Levy's *The Long Song* (2010). In chapter one, I examine the regulation and control of migrant and asylum seeker populations in twenty-first century Britain in *By the Sea*. The novel underlines the ways in which the biopolitical regulation of bodies in both geopolitical and literary space creates a hierarchical concept of the human. Drawing on seminal texts on biopolitics from Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, I explore the spatial and racial management of migrant bodies and, also, the ways in which the movements of migrants form a positive biopolitics, undermining the bureaucracy of the state's immigration controls. Ultimately, the novel suggests that the movement of populations creates transnational affiliations which deconstruct essentialist categories of identification. Chapter two examines the spatial management of slaves on the colonial plantation in *The Long Song*. This chapter is also concerned with literary space and explores the role of colonial literatures such as slave narratives, missionary pamphlets and travelogues, in creating and reinforcing racial hierarchies. Specifically, Levy's novel engages intertextually with the slave narrative *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (1831) in order to demonstrate how the black female subject was constructed through literature. In addition, by comparing black and white women's publications in the nineteenth century, Levy's novel emphasises the power of white women to map the material space of the plantation and filter the narrative of colonialism in their novels and travelogues. Contrastingly, black women's movements were curtailed by white planters and their writing was also carefully framed and edited by white publishers. Finally, I argue that Levy's novel remaps the plantation space by providing a counter-narrative of slavery which undermines official historiography.

1. Introduction

This study focuses on two post-millennial novels by black British authors: Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001) and Andrea Levy's *The Long Song* (2010). The novels differ from each other in various ways. *The Long Song* describes the life of a female slave on a Jamaican sugar plantation in the nineteenth century and *By the Sea* depicts the life of a Zanzibari asylum seeker in twenty-first century Britain. While *By the Sea* is mainly realist in form, *The Long Song* is related in a grotesque, parodic mode. However, both novels illustrate the effects of colonialism on British society. Equally, they undermine the concept of a homogenous British identity by emphasising the ways that contemporary British culture has been shaped by myriad of ethnicities and multicultural influences. In particular, both novels underline the contributions of people from Africa and of African descent to British culture and identity. Correspondingly, my analysis of these two novels is concerned with the relationship between the construction of race, space and the movement of populations. More specifically, I argue that these novels illustrate that, historically, the biopolitical management of populations and the control of borders and space is crucial to the definition of the human being. At the same time, the novels demonstrate the potential of marginalised subjects to produce alternative spaces and create modes of affiliation which are outside the restrictive framework of national identity.

Before describing my theoretical approach to the novels, it is important to underline the benefits of a comparative analysis of these two texts and to contextualise these novelists within the black British literary tradition. Firstly, the novelists had very different upbringings. Abdulrazak Gurnah was born in Zanzibar in 1948. When he was a teenager, Zanzibar gained full independence from Britain in 1963. Gurnah witnessed the 1964 revolution when the last Sultan of Zanzibar, Jamshid bin Abdullah was deposed and an oppressive Marxist regime came to power under Sheikh Abeid Karume. Educated under the

British colonial system, he decided to further his studies and came to Britain to attend university in 1968. This was a period of social upheaval and racial hostility against migrants in Britain epitomised by Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech. Gurnah completed his studies at the University of Kent in the 1980s. He had previously taught at Bayero University Kano in Nigeria and is currently based at the University of Kent.¹ Gurnah is ambivalent about his relationship to Britain. His concept of home and belonging is mutable and incorporates various cultural and ethnic affiliations. While *By the Sea* focuses on domestic space, it is primarily concerned with public spaces such as the airport, state border zones, immigration control centres and detention centres for asylum seekers. Overall, Gurnah's work challenges the hegemony of nationalist discourse and contains multiple influences, including aspects of his colonial education, his Muslim faith and Arabic literature in Africa.

In contrast to Gurnah, Andrea Levy was born in Britain in 1956. Her father had travelled to Britain on the S.S. Windrush. Growing up in the sixties and seventies in North London, she was often the only black child in her class and her parents communicated very little to her about life in the West Indies because they were anxious for her to assimilate into life in Britain. Levy's early literary influences included Toni Morrison, Audre Lourde and James Baldwin. She was also influenced by feminist writers in Britain such as Michelle Roberts and Zoe Fairbairn.² She published her first novel in her late thirties and, although she had little knowledge of her Caribbean heritage growing up, her fiction is concerned with cultivating a social awareness of the history of slavery and imperialism in Britain. Levy's writing is invested in the idea of Britain as home for many different population groups and, also, in the role of colonial slavery in shaping contemporary British society. She is the first female, British-born novelist to depict black women's experience of Caribbean slavery. In particular, *The Long Song* focuses on the predominantly female space of the plantation house.

Although these writers have very different backgrounds, they also have many similarities and their novels share common themes. For instance, as writers of African descent, their novels describe the movement of people between Britain and Africa and, also, the complex history of cultural exchange that developed as a result of trade, colonialism and migration. Both also write about the history of slavery; Levy's focus is on plantation slavery in the Caribbean and Gurnah refers to the history of slavery in Zanzibar and the Indian Ocean more broadly. They are both interested in the movement of populations under slavery and with making these diverse and, often, marginalised histories of movement visible through fiction. As a result, their writing is concerned with themes of displacement, racism and feelings of alienation in a hostile cultural environment. Finally, both authors are concerned with the relationship between borders, the production of space, the movement of populations and the construction of a normative concept of the human being.

As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, both *By the Sea* and *The Long Song* examine the boundaries of the nation and how these boundaries are defined through the political exclusion of racialised or migrant bodies. They also illustrate how various social, cultural and political discourses have historically shaped Europe and European identity. However, the novels emphasise the porosity of the Europe border and the instability of European identity which has been altered through subterranean border crossings, ethnic and racial inter-mixing and migration. Gurnah is primarily concerned with geopolitics, the regulation of state borders and the marginalisation of certain populations at border zones. For him, marginalised and excluded populations are rendered inhuman by the sovereign powers of the state. By contrast, Levy is more explicitly concerned with literary space, specifically, the relationship between colonial literature and the construction of the black female body, questions of narrative authority and the politics of literary representation. For both authors,

however, the production and control of literary space contributes to the formation of concepts of the human and inhuman.

Drawing on both Michel Foucault's and Giorgio Agamben's work on biopolitics, I argue that the novels discussed here contribute to a growing body of work that explores the relationship between space, borders and the human. In the last forty years, the concept of space has become a central philosophical concern among novelists, literary critics and social theorists. In his seminal work *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), Edward Soja notes that Foucault's prediction of an "epoch of space" (11) had finally been realised at the end of the twentieth century, with a geographic epistemology increasingly evident in critical social theory.³ As a result of what Soja terms the "spatialisation of the critical imagination" (11), social theorists have placed a greater emphasis on the role of space as a defining influence on social life and the development of the human subject.⁴

The following chapters underline the connection between the production of social and literary space and the racialised body in both *By the Sea* and *The Long Song*. Literary critics such as Edward Said, Pascale Casanova and Katherine McKittrick, to mention but a few, have foregrounded the relationship between space and literature, focusing specifically on the effects of power relations on textual production. As Said and McKittrick have argued, literature reifies certain spaces as dominant and normalises specific bodies within those spaces.⁵ Certain bodies are imbued with authority and certain narratives are prioritised while other bodies and narratives are marginalised or excluded. Following Said and McKittrick, I argue that two novels analysed in the following chapters aim to reconfigure hegemonic spatial practices and disclose marginalised spaces.

1.2 The History of Black British Fiction

Historically, black British fiction has focused on themes of alienation, displacement and identity. It has aimed to reconfigure the very concept of Britain which is associated with

whiteness and has, historically, excluded black people. After World War Two, there was an increase in migration to Britain from Asia and the Caribbean, following the introduction of the National Act in 1948, which created a new status of citizen for Britain and its colonies. In Britain, 'black' was a political category adopted by Asian and Caribbean settlers—communities with very different traditions, histories and cultural identities—to articulate a collective stance against racism, in contrast to the category 'black' in the United States which referred to individuals from the African-American community.⁶ After World War Two, a black British literary tradition began to develop. Significantly, black British cultural and literary production was concerned with the possibility of establishing a black cultural space but it, also, documented attempts by immigrants to create black geographic spaces in Britain.

In *Dwelling Places: Post-war Black British Writing* (2003), James Procter argues that black British literature reflects the “increasingly differentiated, devolved cultural geography of black Britain over the past fifty years” (3). However, he also notes that early black writing in the 1950s and 60s was dominated by male West Indian writers including Andrew Salkey, Kamau Brathwaite, Wilson Harris, James Berry, George Lamming, V.S. Naipaul and Sam Selvon. The work of these male authors focused on central London and involved a “desperate struggle for home” (4) within the context of housing shortages and increased racism from white Britons. As Procter points out in *Writing Black Britain 1948-1998* (2000), references to houses, bedsits and guesthouses “as sites of exclusion or incarceration but also as important symbolic venues at which the local black community [could] congregate” (116) were an important motif of the literature of this period.

In *Dwelling Places*, Procter observes that black communities became increasingly ghettoised in Britain and experienced racism at an institutional level during the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, black people also worked to establish a space in the public sphere which would become a “mobilising category” (75) for political and cultural resistance. The

appropriation of public spaces by black people manifested in the form of street protests against racism and also, in the establishment of predominantly black settlements in areas such as Brixton, Clapham and Southall from the 1950s onwards. Correspondingly, the literary focus also shifted from the space of home to that of the street. Novels such as Lamming's *The Pleasure of Exile* (1960), Andrew Salkey's *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* (1960) and V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967) reinforce the image of the solitary black male wandering the streets, and reverse the actions of the imperial explorer's encounter with the colonies, by mapping and territorialising the British city.⁷ Procter evokes the notion of the black British *flâneur* who explored the urban landscape in an attempt to disrupt the whiteness of the space and, also, to "describe, reinscribe and claim" (97) the streets as a means of territorialising the metropolitan space.

In addition, literature from the 1970s onwards became increasingly anti-establishment, alluding, for instance, to the deployment of racist policing policies and the criminalisation of black youths.⁸ As Procter notes, there was a move away from prose-based writing to poetry which experimented further with Creole linguistic forms in order to assert a distinct black identity which recalled the artists' African and Caribbean heritage and, also, separated them from the Standard English of the establishment. Procter observes that during the 70s and 80s, the streets were also a space of communal expression for black people in the form of protests, cultural events, public performances and demonstrations. Overall, black writers were concerned with asserting a positive concept of blackness and with establishing a black community in an increasingly racist environment. Poetry from Linton Kwesi Johnson, Marsha Prescod and Valerie Bloom describe the racism and hostility towards black people during the 70s and 80s.

Arguably, the novelists discussed in this study resonate with this earlier generation of writers and their work shares common motifs and themes such as experience of displacement,

the establishment of a black space through literature and the criticism of institutional racism. Also, Gurnah and Levy form part of a group of post-millennial, African and Caribbean, black British novelists—including Caryl Phillips, Brian Chikwava, Nafida Mohammed, Gabriel Gbadamosi, Bernardine Evaristo, Courttia Newland and Helen Oyeyemi, among others—who are redefining Britain and British literature. These novelists also engage with political and philosophical debates on the relationship between space, borders, identity and human subjectivity.

Furthermore, like the novelists discussed in this project, critical theorists such as Paul Gilroy and Imogen Tyler foreground questions of race, social exclusion and space in their work. Following the work of continental philosophers such as Foucault and Agamben, Gilroy and Tyler have linked the neo-liberal economic policies of the Blair government—which came to power in 1997— with the marginalisation of black people, migrants, the poor and asylum seekers.⁹ These critics have argued that, as Britain has become increasingly multicultural, the rise of extreme nationalism, anxieties about the loss of British identity and nostalgia for the status associated with English imperialism have become features of modern life.¹⁰ For instance, in the aftermath 9/11 attacks and 7/7 London bombings, asylum seekers and Muslim migrants became targets of xenophobia in Britain as incidences of ultra-nationalist violence increased. Interestingly, the type of society described by Gilroy and Tyler is reminiscent of an analysis made by Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques in their introduction to *The Politics of Thatcherism* (1983) where they allude to the “reactionary Victorianism” (11) which characterised political life in Britain in the 1970s and 80s.¹¹ Hall and Jacques describe the political landscape as being rooted in “patriarchalism, racism and imperialist nostalgia” (11). Arguably, the concerns of the earlier generation of writers and cultural theorists also preoccupy these twenty-first century novelists and critics which demonstrates the cyclical pattern of racism and ultra-nationalism in Britain while, at the same time, illustrating that

British society is, perhaps, not ready to come to terms with its multicultural surroundings and the consequences of imperialism.

My first chapter on Gurnah's *By the Sea* examines post-millennial migrations to Britain from Africa and Eastern Europe. The novel engages with the legal discourses of human rights, citizenship and asylum which are so critical to twenty-first century debates on migration. By examining the novel in connection with Giorgio Agamben's discussion of sovereign power, "bare life" and stateless peoples, my analysis of *By the Sea* underlines the continuing significance of sovereign power in twenty-first century governmental organisations and policies. In particular, the novel is very much concerned with systems of control and techniques of regulation instituted by government and governmental bodies such as the police, the prison service and the immigration authorities. Additionally, I compare the incidences of racism and hostility experienced by two African migrants in the novel—one of whom travels to Britain in nineteen-sixties and the other in the early twenty-first century—in order to highlight the persistence of racist exclusion in Britain. In this way, the themes of *By the Sea* can be connected to the earlier Windrush-era novels of George Lamming and Sam Selvon and, also, to the political writing of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy who are concerned with institutional racism against black people in Britain and, also, with undermining the cultural hegemony of whiteness.

Significantly, much of the earlier literature and critical theory of black Britain was dominated by men; however, the oeuvre of Andrea Levy has contributed significantly to the portrayal of black women's space in Britain. Levy is part of a black feminist literary tradition which began to emerge in the 1970s.¹² On a number of occasions, she has discussed the failure of British people to connect their contemporary multi-cultural surroundings with the history of British imperialism.¹³ In *The Long Song*, she aims to redress this by exploring the history of slavery in the Caribbean and its ramifications for contemporary Britain. Levy's

novel also alludes to the ways in which imperialism and colonial literature constructed a specific concept of Englishness on the one hand and, on the other hand, produced a particular concept of the black subject for white British people. In particular, the novel engages with the genre of the slave narrative in order to comment on questions of female narrative authority, the politics of literary production and the construction of the black subject for a white readership. Arguably, as I will show, *The Long Song* illustrates the disciplinary function of literary texts which map spaces and reinforce territorial binaries of centre and periphery.

It is important to note that my analysis of these novels through the prism of biopolitics represents a departure from the earlier critical material on African literature and African diaspora literature. In *The African Imagination* (2001), F. Abiola Irele discusses the history of African literature and deploys the term “African imagination” (8) to describe the body of work by writers from Africa and of African descent writing in a multiplicity of languages.¹⁴ Irele emphasises the importance of orality and oral literatures in African culture. He describes orality as a fundamental part of the African imagination because it represents a connection to a fixed, pre-colonial African identity. African writers who write in European languages and incorporate elements of oral literature are, for Irele, attempting to “reintegrate a discontinuity of experience in a new consciousness and imagination” (16). Orality asserts the primacy of speech and examples of orality in written texts include proverbs, ideophones, aphorisms, loan words and transliteration. By associating orality with a homogenous, pre-colonial African identity, Irele reinforces the binary opposition between African orality and European letters. However, as I will argue here, in the post-millennial context, novelists such as Gurnah and Levy deconstruct essentialist concepts of race, showing, instead, that it is the management of populations and space that generates and reifies racial difference.¹⁵ These novelists are therefore interested in promoting transcultural exchange and creating transnational counter-publics.

1.3 Methodology

In the following two chapters, I draw on Foucault's theory of biopolitics to explore the relationship between racism, techniques of population control and space. Foucault's work was expanded upon by Giorgio Agamben and it sheds light on the ways in which the management of populations by European empires became a model for the regulation and control of people in fascist states and during states of emergency in modern democracies. For that reason, it is important to outline the theoretical underpinnings of Foucauldian biopolitics. In *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (1976), Foucault describes the disciplinary nature of power which, he argues, has been focused on the control and regulation of the human body from the seventeenth century onwards.¹⁶ Describing this type of power as "biopower," he defines it as a form of discipline involving the "subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" (140). More specifically, as Foucault suggests, biopower involves the regulation of sexual activity, the medicalisation of bodies, the management of life and the preoccupation with human hygiene which became central to the "safeguarding of society" (147).

As Foucault argues, biopower is concerned with the health and vitality of the body; the increasing supervision of the body and interventions at the level of bodily health led to what he describes in *The History of Sexuality* as "a biopolitics of the population" (139). For him, the "blood relation" (147) or preoccupation with pure blood was a significant part of the mechanisms of state power centred on the body which resulted in a "eugenic ordering of society" (149). This preoccupation with blood centred on sexuality and the control of sexuality. From the eighteenth century, there was an increasing focus on the medicalisation of the body in order to promote bodily hygiene, regulate sexual activity, prolong life and produce healthy children. Numerous techniques for subjugating bodies developed through

schools, hospitals, the legal system and institutions such as the army. In particular, the bodies of women were medicalised and monitored in order to maximise the health of their children, control their reproductive functions and to secure the future wellbeing of the population. Various economic interventions designed to curb or promote procreation, educational campaigns to promote standards of morality and the monitoring of perceived sexual perversions all contributed to the process of strengthening populations. Foucault argues that, towards the second-half of the nineteenth century, the preoccupation with the health of the population led to racism “in its modern, biologising, statist form” (149). In *Society Must Be Defended* (2003), he discusses the ways in which state racism is directed inwards against its own population in a process of “permanent purification” (62) which, ultimately, became one of “the basic dimensions of social normalisation” (62). Ultimately, this racist biopolitics became a thanatopolitics (politics of death), determining “the break between what must live and what must die” (254).

While Foucault did not fully develop his work on biopolitics, the relationship between racism and biopower in Europe has been explored by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998). Here Agamben refers to the ancient term *homo sacer* as an important feature of modern politics (83). *Homo sacer* derives from the ancient Roman concepts of bios and zoe. These terms denote life: *bios* denotes political life while *zoe* refers purely to existence as a living organism. A *homo sacer* is an individual who has been stripped of his/her political rights and reduced to an animalistic state of “bare life” (*zoe*). The *homo sacer* is still alive but is no longer considered a member of the human community which is why he/she can be killed with impunity. As Agamben argues, the “sovereign sphere” (83) is the primary space where life “may be killed but not sacrificed” (83) and the production of bare life is “the originary activity of sovereignty” (83). Agamben does not engage with the history of colonial slavery; instead, his study is confined

to twentieth century Europe. For that reason, he cites Jews and other detainees in concentration camps during World War Two as the primary examples of people who have been reduced to the status of *homo sacer*.¹⁷ Other examples of the *homo sacer* in contemporary society include refugees, asylum seekers, internally-displaced persons, prisoners of war and detainees in detention centres such as Guantanamo Bay.

Moreover, Agamben argues that the detention centre or camp rather than the city has become the biopolitical paradigm of contemporary western society. He depicts the camp as a permanent spatial arrangement which remains outside the normal legal order and argues that it arises out of a prolonged *state of exception* when the state suspends constitutional norms that protect individual liberties. This type of executive or extra-legal invocation of state power is now a fundamental technique of modern European governments since World War Two. In his book *The State of Exception* (2005), Agamben defines a prolonged state of exception, which gives rise to the 'camp' as "a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizen who, for some reason, cannot be integrated into the political system." (2) For him, detention centres or holding zones where refugees seeking asylum are indefinitely detained are contemporary example of camps.

While the work of both Foucault and Agamben has contributed to the analysis of racism in fascist Europe, they do not consider the relationship between colonial racism and fascism. However, in *Race and the Education of Desire* (1995), Ann Laura Stoler reconfigures Foucault's discussion of the regulation of bodies and the control of sexuality by examining biopolitics in relation to imperialism. She extends Foucault's analysis of sexuality and racism by arguing that the disciplinary principles associated with biopower were, arguably, first developed in the colonial context. For her, there was "an implicit racial grammar [which] underwrote the sexual regimes of bourgeois culture in more ways than

Foucault explored” (12) and it emerged much earlier during the period of imperial expansion. As Stoler points out, the very concept of a healthy, normative “European” body was, historically, defined against a racialised body. For instance, anxieties surrounding “pure blood” and the strength of the nation were crucial to the ideologies of empire and were deeply affected by the fear of miscegenation in the colonies. As Stoler argues, the concept of what it meant to be European was tied to whiteness and defined against the “immoral European working class and native Other” (100) and, also, against mixed-blood or mixed-race populations in the colonies. While Stoler confines her analysis of the regulation of sexuality to imperialism, she does not assess the relevance of the colonial regulation of populations on contemporary society. As my examination of *By the Sea* will demonstrate, the construction of racial categories and biopolitical management of marginalised or migratory populations has persisted.

My first chapter examines Gurnah’s depiction of the experiences of illegal migrants and asylum seekers who exist outside of the official boundary of the modern British state in *By the Sea*. The novel describes the journey of Saleh Omar, a Zanzibari asylum seeker who arrives in Britain. Over the course of the narrative, he becomes reacquainted with a fellow countryman called Latif Mahmud, who had migrated to Britain in the nineteen-sixties. Saleh had known Latif’s family years previously and had been involved in a feud with them over the deeds to a house. The novel is structured in three parts; the first section documents Saleh’s arrival in Britain and his experience of the immigration system; the second part depicts Latif Mahmud’s experiences as a migrant in the sixties; finally, the third part recounts Saleh’s past in Zanzibar and his new life in England as his friendship with Latif develops. Each section is told from the first-person perspective and the realist mode of the novel allows Gurnah to critique the bureaucracy of the immigration process and underline the historical pattern of racism and hostility towards migrants seeking sanctuary in Europe.

In contrast to Levy's analysis of the domestic sphere of the plantation house in the second chapter, *By the Sea* considers the operation of racist biopolitics in public spaces such as airports and immigrations offices, as well as in the private sphere. The novel describes Saleh's detainment at Gatwick airport and his interview with the British immigration authority. I suggest that Saleh's exclusion by the British state means that he becomes what Agamben describes as a *homo sacer*. For Agamben, the regulation of the biopolitical state is the main function of sovereign power and, following Agamben and Judith Butler, I argue that the power wielded by unelected state officials such as immigration officer in the novel constitutes the implementation of a traditional sovereign power rooted in the Christian tradition. I further argue that the segregation and exclusion of migrants and asylum seekers in detention centres is an example of what Agamben describes as the camp or "camp mentality" which has become the paradigm of the modern European state.

The novel not only documents the state's attempts to curtail the movements of migrants at the state border, it also describes the experience of asylum seekers in the British home. Saleh is relocated from the detention centre to a B&B and the proprietor, Celia treats him with suspicion and disdain. I point to the racial and religious hierarchy within the immigration system as Saleh encounters migrants from Eastern Europe in B&B and notes that they have a more positive experience in Britain because they are white and Christian. I argue that the novel undermines the notion of a European community based on a shared history and religious affiliation by emphasising the cultural and linguistic influence of Africa on European identity. Ultimately, I suggest that the novel affirms a positive concept of biopolitics in contrast to the thanatopolitics discussed by Foucault and Agamben. In this chapter, I argue that Saleh's movements and remapping of the social space exemplify what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe as the reterritorialisation of space by migrants in their book *Empire* (2000). Through their circulation, migrants reconfigure the space known as

the camp and establish new spaces. They evade the social control of the biopolitical state and constitute new transcultural modes of affiliation. Most importantly, Saleh's movements constitute alternative forms of belonging which undermine the mechanisms of control deployed by the immigration authorities.

Like *The Long Song, By the Sea* also reterritorialises literary space through intertextual references to canonical texts of western letters such as William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Herman Melville's novella *Bartleby the Scrivener* (1853). I argue that Gurnah emphasises the transnational function of literary texts by connecting the characters and themes of these seemingly disparate texts with his own novel. Following Pascale Casanova in *The World Republic of Letters* (2004), I suggest that Gurnah's novel denationalises literary space by highlighting the multiple histories and heritages of Britain's population. In Gurnah's novel, the long history of movement to and from Europe creates new nomadic subjectivities which transgress borders and transcend rigid identity structures.

Interestingly, *The Long Song* describes the emergence of biopolitical controls during imperialism in two ways: on the one hand, it depicts the formation of biological racism in the colonial plantation and, on the other hand, it examines the role of literature in the construction of the normalised subjects of biopower. The novel describes the life of July, a house slave on a sugar plantation in Jamaica in the 1830s. Recounting the abolition of slavery and the period of apprenticeship that followed, the novel is a neo-slave narrative. In this chapter, I also draw on the work of Katherine McKittrick in *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (2006), to examine the geography of the plantation space in the novel. I show that the novel explores how the plantation is divided, controlled and mapped by the white plantation owners and overseers.

The Long Song describes July's life at Amity, including the slave rebellions on the island in 1831. July gives birth to two children over the course of the narrative. Her firstborn, Thomas is adopted by a white Baptist preacher called James Kinsman and is raised in England. July's second child, Emily is the daughter of the plantation owner, Robert Goodwin. After a few years in Jamaica, Robert and his wife, Caroline decide to return to England and they take Emily with them. July remains at Amity until she is reunited with her son years later. Thomas is a successful publisher in London and he encourages his mother to write her life story. Thomas acts as the editor for July's narrative and it adopts the conventions of the slave narrative genre with the editor's preface which introduces the reader to the main text.

In my second chapter, I argue that *The Long Song* engages intertextually with the Caribbean slave narrative *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (1831) in order to reclaim and reconfigure black female literary space. Prince dictated her narrative to Susannah Strickland, a poet, and it was edited by the Anti-Slavery Society Secretary, Thomas Pringle. He also wrote a preface to the narrative and included a supplement with various corroborative documents in the form of letters, newspaper articles and testimonials. *The Long Song* draws attentions to the role of the white editor and the various framing devices in the slave narrative genre in order to comment on the question of narrative authority and the control of black female space in the genre.

As the narrator of the novel, July asserts narrative control over the text and undermines the role of the editor, her educated son, Thomas Kinsman. Levy's protagonist is opinionated and rebellious. For instance, as a literate slave, she includes her own preface to the narrative and asserts control of the textual space. By including Creole phraseology in July's narrative, Levy alludes to the oral culture of slaves and points to the original, unedited version of Mary Prince's spoken narrative which, I argue, constitutes a disclosure of black space. At the same time, Levy's use of the grotesque draws attentions to the partiality of any

published text, including historical autobiography, and suggests that there cannot be any authentic version of the past.

As well as engaging with *The History of Mary Prince*, I argue that *The Long Song* refers intertextually to novels such as Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and ,also, with travelogues such as *Domestic Manners and Social Customs of the White, Coloured and Negro Populations of the West Indies* (1834) by Mrs Carmichael. I show how Levy juxtaposes black and white women's writing in the nineteenth century in order to highlight the social and economic privilege of middle-class and upper-class women in British society who had the capacity to write and publish their novels. In contrast, black women's texts were framed, edited and published by whites. In addition, Levy compares black and white women's experience in the space of the plantation in order to demonstrate the ability of white women to travel to the colonies, to map and explore the space of the plantation, in contrast to the circumscribed lives of slaves whose movements were regulated and curtailed by whites. Interestingly, Levy's novel focuses on the private sphere of the home rather than the public domain, emphasising that the every-day experience of life as a female domestic slave was restricted to the plantation house and is, as a result, largely unrecorded. I suggest that Levy uses fiction to imaginatively remap the plantation space and depict spaces which have not been documented in official historiography.

Significantly, Levy also stresses the presence of black populations in nineteenth-century Britain in her novel which, ultimately, undermines the whiteness of British social space. For instance, both of July's children are taken from her and raised in Britain. While Thomas is reunited with his mother, Emily's whereabouts remain unknown at the end of the novel. In this way, Levy also highlights the disavowal of black subjects and black stories from the official historiography of British imperialism. Also, *The Long Song* also deploys elements of the grotesque and farce to question the official English version of colonial

slavery and to point to gaps in the history of slavery which were too traumatic to be documented or which may not have been recorded at all. For instance, Levy utilises farce and the grotesque as a diversion during several traumatic moments in the narrative and this disorients the reader. By emphasising the omission of certain traumatic episodes in July's life, the novel points to the impossibility of representing these events through fiction and suggests that some repressed traumas of empire have yet to be confronted and may, in fact, never be confronted.

Ultimately, *By the Sea* and *The Long Song* emphasise the disciplinary function of literature but, also, the ability of literature to elude social control and to reveal alternative spaces. The disclosure of alternative space and acts of refusal described in the novels undermine hegemonic power structures, conveying the possibility of reconfiguring biopower. Most importantly, by examining both of these novels, the following chapters challenge the linear narrative of progress and equality associated with European democratic societies by highlighting the similarities between the biologising control of populations during colonial slavery and the bureaucratic regulation of post-millennial migrations to Europe. Arguably, the literary narratives of displacement, migration and dislocation discussed here are crucial because they interrogate the very concept of Europe and emphasise the racial, social and cultural hierarchies in supposedly democratic, equitable politics upon which Europe is founded. These transnational literatures reframe Europe by mapping the history of imperialism and fascism; moreover, they demonstrate that the ideologies of imperialism and fascism are entrenched in the policies of democratic governments in contemporary Europe and routinely manifest in the treatment of migrants, refugees and other minorities. Specifically, as I demonstrate in the following chapters, *The Long Song* links the construction of racial hierarchies of human life in the nineteenth century with problems of racism and social inequality in contemporary British society. *By the Sea* points to patterns of racist

biopolitics and “states of exception” in European history which extends from colonialism to Nazism and is also evident in twenty-first century treatment of asylum seekers.

2. Biopolitics and Migration in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*

Abdulrazak Gurnah's aptly titled novel *By the Sea* examines the relationship between the migrant and the often inhospitable host nation. The novel highlights the disciplinary processes which underline the modern immigration system in Britain, the constant flow of individuals through Europe and the potential of migratory journeys to reconfigure hegemonic spaces. Arguably, in neo-liberal states such as Britain, concepts of home and belonging are often contested when there is a perceived threat to national borders as a result of an influx of asylum seekers, migrants or refugees. The preservation of what is perceived as the "authentic" culture of the host country operates within a racist biopolitical paradigm which excludes migrants and positions them as radically separate them from the mainstream population. For example, asylum seekers are often housed in detention centres in isolated areas, away from the general population and also prevented from accessing employment and the social services available to mainstream citizens. The host state effectively maintains the indeterminate status of asylum seekers for indefinite periods and their segregation is formulated as a means of protecting the cultural identity of the mainstream population.

Historically, the concepts of space and identity have always been intertwined. As I mentioned in my introduction, during the era of European colonial expansion, the occupation of colonial territories led to fears about racial impurity and miscegenation which undermined "European" identity and, in twentieth and twenty-first century Europe, migratory populations—often from former colonial territories—now occupy traditionally "European" spaces. In many cases, these economic migrants are connected to their host countries by a complex colonial history and have now arrived in to Europe in search of a better life or to escape economic stagnation in their country of origin. The constant legal and illegal movement of migrants undermines the very concepts of national borders and territory. The spaces created by migrants in Europe have transformed the social and material landscape.

Correspondingly, novels such as *By the Sea* and *The Long Song* contribute to an increasingly diverse cultural tradition produced by migrants and their descendants who are born in Britain. Arguably, migrant populations have also completely reconfigured the cultural landscape by producing literary, artistic and filmic representations of their experiences. Earlier, I described the development of the black British literary tradition and argued that the narratives produced by black writers often transform the pain and loss of the migratory experience into more complex forms of belonging, through the establishment of black geographic and literary spaces.¹⁸

By the Sea documents the plight of Zanzibari asylum seeker Saleh Omar who arrives in Britain with false identification papers after a prolonged detention in a number of internment camps in Zanzibar, an island off the coast of East Africa which was formerly a German and British colony. Acting on the advice he received when purchasing his airline ticket, Saleh pretends he cannot speak English upon his arrival in Britain and adopts a pseudonym, Mr. Shaaban. His legal advisor from the Refugee organisation procures a translator for him who turns out to have an important connection with Saleh's past, his former countryman Latif Mahmud, a poet who also works as a professor at a nearby university. The narrative alternates between the journeys of both migrants, over thirty years apart. Latif had been sent to Germany in the nineteen-sixties to study dentistry but abandoned his studies after a few months to travel across Europe and eventually settled in Britain. In Zanzibar, the two men's families were well acquainted and had feuded for generations over the deeds to a house. Years previously, Saleh Omar loaned a sum of money to a Persian merchant Hussein and is given the deeds to a house owned by Latif's father, Rajab Shaaban Mahmud, as security. When Hussein absconds and defaults on the loan, Saleh claims ownership of the house, instigating a long-running feud with the Mahmud family. Rajab Shaaban's wife plots to avenge her family with the help of one of her lovers, a government minister, resulting in

Saleh's imprisonment for over eleven years. In that time, his wife and daughter die. After his release from prison, Saleh lives in relative peace as a trader, until Rajab Shaaban's eldest son Hassan returns and attempts to claim Saleh's house as his own. Saleh decides to flee to Britain and uses Rajab Shaaban's birth certificate to obtain a passport. Over the course of the narrative, Saleh and Latif reconcile and reminisce about their shared pasts, their conflicting memories of their families' feud and the challenge of adjusting to life in Britain, which grants them only a quasi-legitimate status.

At the centre of the novel is a dispute over a family home; ironically, the feud between the Omar and Shaaban Mahmud families reflects the novel's wider concern about the nation space as 'home' and the borders that are erected to secure that space for a specific population. By pointing to the instability of the concept of home, *By the Sea* undermines the notion of a homogeneous identity associated with a place of origins. Gurnah emphasises the scale of migrant populations in Europe and re-imagines the concept of home as constantly shifting, without roots, and not necessarily determined by national, religious or ethnic affiliations. By incorporating various migratory narratives from Africa and Eastern Europe into the novel, he also stresses the positive value of a common language such as English as a way of connecting individual lives and building relationships. Global languages such as English are not just negatively conceived as a mode of linguistic dominance but can be appropriated to forge new cultural alliances which question dominant cultural values.¹⁹ As a writer and migrant—a Tanzanian novelist based in England and writing in English—Gurnah undermines the hierarchy of both literary and geographic space.²⁰

Gurnah writes in English incorporating Swahili and Arabic words into his novels to highlight the cultural and linguistic complexity of East Africa and to challenge the centrality of Europe in literary and cultural production. It is worth noting that the pseudonym adopted by Saleh Omar in the novel is Shaaban, perhaps a reference to the Tanzanian poet and

essayist Robert Bin Shaaban (1st January 1909- 22nd June 1962) who favoured the use of traditional African verse and wrote in Swahili. Like Gurnah, Shaaban was also educated under the British colonial system in Tanganyika. Although Gurnah writes in English, the reference to Shaaban draws attention to the Tanzanian literary tradition. In an interview with Sushelia Nasta for *Writing Across Worlds* (2004), Gurnah emphasises the importance of being a writer “who sees himself belonging to a wider world” (362) and, in an article written in the same year entitled “Writing Place,” he also describes English as “a spacious and roomy house, accommodating writing and knowledge with heedless hospitality” (27). The themes of home and belonging which are so significant in *By the Sea* are also evidenced in Gurnah’s view on the writing process. Referring to the English language as a “house” at once connotes a familial association among writers which also overrides national and political attachments. In *By the Sea*, subjectivity is nomadic, deriving from multiple social and cultural interactions. As I will argue, the incorporation of multiple migrant narratives and language-borrowing in the novel reflects this nomadic subjectivity. The novel also highlights the ways in which the circulation of migratory populations in modern Western society has led to an increased in border security and surveillance. Thematically, the novel’s preoccupation with spatial politics is a reconfiguration and extension of Foucauldian biopolitical discourse evidenced in the work of theorists such as Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. Arguably, the management of migrant populations by potential host countries demonstrates the thanatopolitical structure of modern biopolitics.

As I mentioned in my introduction, in the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault traces the development of racism in the form of a society of blood in the sixteenth century, which sought to maintain a white, Christian identity, to a biopolitics of sexuality in the nineteenth and twentieth century which was concerned with the optimum health of the nation.

Foucault’s thesis is that with the emergence of industrial capitalism, the body was now

perceived as a machine with various economic, social and physical controls enacted upon it in order to optimize its capabilities:

The body [was] imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was conducted through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population. (139)

For Foucault, biopower operates as a biological state racism involving the regulation of bodies, or populations, to remove any defective elements and to promote “health, life expectancy and longevity.” In short, the biopolitics of the population lead to an ideology of “superior blood” (150). Preoccupations with “pure blood” and “mixed blood” led to a “society of blood” (147). According to Foucault, these preoccupations with pure blood or mixed blood culminated in an analytics of sexuality—designed to regulate sex and reproduction among populations— which, importantly, derived from the colonial period where the threat of miscegenation abounded. As colonial expansion became more prevalent so did the ideology around the purity of blood and what Foucault describes as the mythical concern with the “triumph of the race” (149). As I mentioned in my introduction, Foucault implies that the regulation of sexuality and concerns over the physical and mental health of the population corresponds to modes of exclusion which normalises and defines the biological character of a given society. Foucault does not assess in detail how concepts of the biological degeneracy of non-European populations were utilised to reinforce a unitary identity in Europe during the aftermath of colonial expansion; in other words, he does not fully develop his analysis of racism and biopolitics, abandoning this study to concentrate on governmentality.²¹ On the other hand, *By the Sea* critiques the relationship between the exclusionary principles of biopolitics and migration. More specifically, the novel illustrates

how migratory populations are managed and categorised through the process of immigration control. As Foucault suggested, colonialism instituted the ideology of European racial superiority and *By the Sea* also links the biopolitical administration of colonised peoples during the colonial era with Nazism and the more subtle forms of regulation that characterise economic globalisation.

In a biopolitical reading of the novel, Saleh could be described, in Giorgio Agamben's terms, as a *homo sacer* because his legal status is indeterminate as an asylum seeker at the mercy of the British state. Echoing Agamben's argument in *Homo Sacer*, the novel examines the relationship between rights and national citizenship. Agamben argues that traditionally rights are linked to the nation. The word nation derives from the word *nascere* which means to be born. Furthermore, as Agamben argues, human rights discourse which developed from documents such as the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen perceive the place of birth as "the source and bearer of rights" (127). This link became especially pertinent with the advent of National Socialism with its ideology of "*blut und boden*" (blood and soil) (129). He suggests that the refugee or stateless person calls into question "the fundamental categories of the nation state from the birth nation to the man citizen" (134). For Agamben, the increase in refugees from war-torn countries has undermined the fictional link between man and citizen, nativity and nationality:

Refugees represent such a disquieting element in the order of the modern nation state; that is, above all because by breaking the continuity between man and citizen, nativity and nationality, they put the originary fiction of modern sovereignty in crisis. (131)

Likewise in the novel, stateless individuals and migratory populations are denied basic rights because they are not members of a political community where their rights can be upheld. By including two generations in his narrative, Gurnah traces the link between birth and rights—

which is so relevant to contemporary immigration policy in Europe—to the period of colonial expansion, where the disciplinary measures associated with modern biopolitics were first implemented.²²

Early in the novel, Saleh discusses his love of maps, commenting on the biopolitics of cartography and the historically-privileged position of Europe as a geopolitical space. Maps can be used to regulate and discipline space in the Foucauldian sense and as a result, they also reinforce socially-constructed racial hierarchies:

I speak to maps. And sometimes they say something back to me...Before maps, the world was limitless. It was maps that gave the world shape and made it seem like territory, like something that could be possessed, not just laid waste and plundered. Maps made places on the edge of the imagination seem graspable and placable. And later when it became necessary, geography became biology in order to construct a hierarchy in which to place people who lived in their inaccessibility and primitiveness in other places on the map. (35)

This passage recalls Edward Said's discussion of imaginative geographies in *Orientalism* (1979). Said describes the mental process of designating familiar and unfamiliar spaces as “a way of making geographic distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary” (54). Similarly, Saleh describes the world before cartography as “limitless” and without shape or structure. The word “limitless” evokes a sense of possibility, equality and potentiality. Furthermore, he suggests that before maps, areas were not defined by their artificially-constructed position on “the edge” or in the centre of the world map. For Said, the geographic distinctions generated by maps confer a physical distinction among populations and set up categories of “us” and “them” so that those occupying other territories are perceived as inferior because “their mentality [is] designated as different from *ours*” (Said's emphasis) (54). Likewise, Gurnah's novel suggests that, in the framework of biopolitical cartography, “geography bec[omes]

biology.” Maps regulate populations as well as territories and normalise certain bodies, positioning individuals considered racially inferior or “primitive” in “other places on the map.” Borders and territory are inscribed through the racial differentiation of bodies and the biopolitical categorisation of those at the periphery as “primitive” and “inaccessible,” thus creating a hierarchy of human beings.²³

Interestingly, Saleh Omar’s discussion of maps refers intertextually to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* which was based on the author’s personal experiences in the Congo in 1890.²⁴ In the novella, the narrator Marlow also mentions his “passion for maps” (1763). In *By the Sea*, Saleh Omar refers to the perception of territories as “something that could be possessed,” while, in *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow discusses the “many blank spaces on the earth” (1763) which were “particularly inviting on a map” (1763) and refers to Africa as “the biggest, the most blank... that I had a hankering after” (1763). Marlow mentions that some parts on the map of Africa had been “filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names” (1763) conveying the power of European colonisers to name and “create” places on the map and, also, to claim ownership of “blank” spaces and territories. The discussion of maps in *By the Sea* also refers to the desire by Europeans to possess territory and highlights the ways in which maps created an imaginative geography where areas on the periphery became “graspable and placable” to those at the centre, a point I will elaborate on in the next chapter. Ironically, Saleh Omar is, like Marlow, an explorer of sorts and he reverses Marlow’s journey by travelling from Africa to London. This journey emphasises the ways in which the biopolitical categories of centre and periphery are radically questioned in *By the Sea* and, instead, the novel presents a new geopolitical landscape constituted by continuous movement and the circulation of populations.

When Saleh Omar arrives in Britain, he is detained at Gatwick Airport. He is immediately removed to an interview room, and questioned by immigration officer Kevin

Edelman. Edelman's role as arbiter of Saleh's fate is significant for a biopolitical reading of the novel as the immigration officer executes a form of sovereign power in his interaction with Saleh. The production of the biopolitical/ thanatopolitical state is the main function of sovereign power. In his later work *State of Exception* (2005), Agamben argues that the sovereign has the power to introduce a *state of exception* or suspension of the law, where he/she can arbitrarily determine the limit of the law. The act by which the state annuls its own laws can be perceived as the operation of sovereign power, whereby a lawless sovereign emerges in place of government. In a *state of exception*, laws are not binding but arbitrary, wielded by unelected officials, such as civil servants and bureaucrats, who interpret them unilaterally, and decide on the very specific details of their application. Notably, in *Precarious Life: the Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), Judith Butler states that sovereignty and governmentality co-exist and sovereignty is not unitary but diffuse. In the current age of governmentality, sovereigns manifest in various legal, administrative and medicinal systems of control and disciplinary power. Butler affirms a Foucauldian concept of power which is dispersed through networks of control rather than emanating from a central authority:

Precisely because our historical situation is marked by governmentality, and this implies, to a certain degree, a loss of sovereignty, that loss is compensated through the resurgence of sovereignty within the field of governmentality. Petty sovereigns abound reigning in the midst of bureaucratic army institutions, mobilised by aims and tactics of power they do not inaugurate or fully control. And yet such figures are delegated with the power to render unilateral decisions, accountable to no law and without any legitimate authority. The resurrected sovereignty is thus not the sovereignty of unified power under the conditions of legitimacy, the form of power that guarantees the political status of representative

institutions. It is, rather, a lawless and prerogatory power, a ‘rogue’ power *par excellence* (Butler’s italics) (56).

This type of “petty” sovereignty discussed by Butler is aptly illustrated in *By the Sea* when Saleh recounts his briefing with the immigration officer at Gatwick Airport. The passport controller is imbued with a sense of power and superiority when he realises that the passenger before him does not have a valid entry visa for the UK. Saleh compares the interview with Edelman to previous experiences of interrogation by internment camp guards in Zanzibar:

I was used to officials who glared and spluttered at you for the sheer pleasure of wielding their hallowed authority. So I expected the immigration *hamal* behind his little podium to register something, to snarl or shake his head, to look up slowly and stare at me with the blaze of assurance with which the fortunate regard the supplicant. But he looked up from leafing through my joke document with a look of suppressed joy in his eyes, like a fisherman who had just felt a tug on the line (5).

In this passage, Saleh refers to the “hallowed authority” of Kevin Edelman describing himself as a “supplicant” before him. The use of religious terminology such as “hallowed” and “supplicant” invokes the religious origins of sovereignty.²⁵ Supplicant has connotations of prayer. It derives from the Latin *supplicare* meaning to beg on one’s knees. The novel suggests that the exercise of sovereign power occurs as Edelman decides Saleh’s fate. Recalling his experience with the immigration officer, Saleh ironically describes Edelman as a “hamal” (5) which denotes a bearer or porter but it is also translated as a “sheep” or “lamb” in Arabic. The sheep or lamb is a religious trope, connoting the relationship between God as shepherd and his faithful as sheep or lambs. Furthermore, the depiction of sovereign power in

this passage of the novel can be related to Foucault's analysis of the history of pastoral power and governmentality, from the reign of the sovereign to modern economic government.

In his 1977/78 lectures at the College De France entitled "Security, Territory and Population," Foucault suggests that the origins of sovereign government emanate from two forms in early Christianity: firstly, the organisation of a pastoral power and secondly, the management and spiritual direction of souls. He also stresses the importance of the image of king-as-shepherd whom God has entrusted with the well-being of the flock. The shepherd provides sustenance and crucially maintains vigilance over the flock. The role of the shepherd and his flock is vital in the violent and bellicose history of the Christian West. Throughout this tumultuous and bloody history, western man is inculcated in a teleological Christian narrative and perceives himself as a sheep in the flock. The Christian Church is founded on this 'shepherd and flock' relationship which institutes the Church's claims of authority over men. Pastoral power gave rise to new methods of managing individual lives and also, to methods of controlling and directing the flock which were centred on concepts of salvation and judgement. For Foucault, the relationship between church and state sovereignty is, in reality, that of pastorate (sovereign power) and government; ultimately, the history of human individualisation in the west emanates from the Christian pastorate. In "Security, Territory and Population," Foucault argues that "the great continuum from sovereignty to government is nothing else but the translation of the continuum from God to men in the "political order" (234). Significantly, he describes the role of the shepherd as being selflessly dedicated to the salvation of the flock. Foucault states that "at the end of the life world, the Christian shepherd, the Christian pastor will have to account for every sheep" (169). Inscribed in this role is the notion of sacrifice. To ensure the well-being of all the sheep, the shepherd/sovereign puts the flock in jeopardy to bring back the lost lamb.

In the interaction between Edelman and Saleh, the migrant can be perceived as the lost lamb. Significantly, Saleh informs us that Edelman is a Jewish name.²⁶ The novel complicates the concept of the lost lamb by introducing racial and ethnic distinctions. Arguably, Edelman is now a sheep in the European flock. He is the lost lamb (*hamal*) that has been brought into the fold and he now performs his role as porter (*hamal*), maintaining vigilance over the entrance to Europe. However, as a Jew, Edelman would, at one time, have been classified as the racial other and reduced to the status of *homo sacer* or bare life. He has now been assimilated into the European family which further reinforces the myth of a coherent European identity. If, as Foucault suggests, sovereign power derives from the Christian pastorate then Kevin Edelman is imbued with this type of power when he processes Saleh's application for asylum. Edelman asserts his sense of belonging by invoking his membership of the European collective and he is also imbued with pastoral sovereign power which manifests in his exclusion of Saleh. This act of exclusion underlines the link between sovereignty and Christianity. Edelman, as the biopolitical representative of the state, underscores the anti-modern processes of sacralisation that support the 'modern' nation-state apparatus.

For Edelman, Saleh is not entitled to asylum and protection by the British state because he is not a European. He informs Saleh:

My parents were refugees from Romania...I know all about being alien and poor, because that is what they went through when they came here, and I know about the rewards. But my parents are European, they have a right, they're part of the family. (12)

Throughout his interview with Edelman, Saleh is informed that he is not a member of the European family and as an African Muslim, he will not be welcomed. Edelman invokes the racial hierarchy within the immigration system by suggesting that white European migrants

have blood ties which afford them more rights than non-Europeans because they are not “part of the family.” Edelman warns Saleh that he does not belong in Britain because he does not “value any of the things we value” (42). He is threatened that English people “will make life hard for you; make you suffer indignities, perhaps even commit violence on you” (42). The notion of mutual recognition or ideological affiliation is often the main reason for immigrants to travel to specific host countries. In many cases, immigrants will travel to countries where they have a commonality such as language. What is not taken into account is that this commonality often stems from exploitative colonial relations that existed in the past—as I discuss in the next chapter— or from the spread of global capitalism in more recent times. Saleh Omar was educated under the British colonial education system in Zanzibar and he makes frequent references to this throughout the novel.

The exchange between Edelman and Saleh illustrates the complete reversal of what should be a life-affirming biopolitics into a thanatopolitics (politics of death). When confronted by Edelman about his right to travel to Europe, Saleh reflects silently to himself about the plundering of wealth and resources throughout the history of colonialism:

That this too solid flesh should melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew...Edelman, was that a German name? Or a Jewish name? Or a made up name? Into a dew, Jew, juju. Anyway, the name of the owner of Europe, who knew its values and had paid for them through generations. But the whole world had paid for Europe’s values already and even if a lot of the time, it had just paid and paid and didn’t get to enjoy them. Think of me as one of those precious objects that Europe took away with her... Do you remember that endless catalogue of objects that were taken away to Europe because they were too fragile and delicate to be left in the clumsy and careless hands of natives? I am fragile and precious too, a sacred

work too delicate to be left in the hands of natives. So now you'd better take me too. (12)

In the first line of this passage “That this too solid flesh should melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew,” Saleh refers to the famous soliloquy from Act One, Scene Two of *Hamlet*. This allusion to a seminal text on human subjectivity in the western literary tradition is juxtaposed with a critique of the barbarism, racism and exploitation of European imperialism. *Hamlet* is arguably one of the most important literary and cultural contributions to the concept of European Enlightenment identity, where the protagonist Hamlet introspectively grapples with the pressures exerted by the outside world and his own desire for self-determination. In a way, Saleh Omar's existential crisis is similar to Hamlet's as they both struggle with questions of belonging, home and the possibility of asserting an autonomous identity. However, as a canonical work of literature, Hamlet's existential crisis has traditionally been globalised. In the above passage, Shakespeare's language is complicated and its universality is questioned as the reference to “dew, Jew, juju” invokes the racial others against which European identity is generally constructed. These concepts are linked to the body or, more precisely, to the disintegrating body which once was “solid flesh” but is now melting into a “dew.” The Jew is historically the racial other in Europe and is perceived as a threat to the stability of European identity. Juju refers to West African religious superstition which contrasts with European Enlightenment rationality and Christian identity during the period of colonial expansion. This metonymic slippage of language (“dew, Jew, juju”) is related directly to the human body which is no longer “solid” but melting into “dew.”

The regulation of the body and the categorisation of populations into those worthy/unworthy of life is the primary function of the biopolitical state. The novel suggests that the concept of a distinct European body—or racial identity—is not fixed and has been continuously destabilised through trade, colonialism, capitalist expansion, war and migration.

Arguably, the appearance of the spectre in *Hamlet* which Horatio describes as signifying “some strange eruption to our state” (Act1, Scene 1, Line 69) is analogous with the role of the migrant in Europe. It could be said that a migrant spectrality haunts Europe and undermines the construction of a distinct European identity and the imposition of its territorial border. The concept of the European associated with modernity is not unitary but fragmented and fluid, developing as a result of various exchanges and interactions with multiple cultural and religious perspectives.²⁷

Additionally, the exchange between Edelman and Saleh is arguably an instance of what Agamben describes, in *Homo Sacer*, as the implementation of the sovereign ban and the reduction of the individual to “bare life.”

The life caught in the sovereign ban is life that is originally sacred—that is, that may be killed but not sacrificed— and, in this sense, the production of bare life is the originary activity of sovereignty. The sacredness of life, which is invoked today as an absolutely fundamental right in opposition to sovereign power, in fact originally expresses precisely both life’s subjection to a power over death and life’s irreparable exposure in the relation of abandonment. (83)

Edelman’s refusal to recognise Saleh is based on a homogenised concept of European identity and its territorial boundary. For Edelman, Saleh’s racial difference means that he does not qualify as a member of the European flock. He is abandoned or his life is “caught in the sovereign ban.” Unlike Edelman, who is white, Saleh is particularly vulnerable as a black Muslim; he will not be brought into the fold and the state—represented here by the unelected official in the form of immigration officer— will not protect him. The imposition of the sovereign ban on the *homo sacer*, reducing him to bare life, exposes the origin of sovereignty in the Christian tradition.²⁸

In a biopolitical act of population management, Edelman relegates Saleh to the refugee camp where his political status is indeterminate. Saleh describes the detention centre as an “encampment in the countryside, which was run by a private company” (42) and administers every aspect of his life. He encounters three male English administrators throughout his stay at the centre, one of whom confiscated his money and documents, relieving him of the identity he had constructed before coming to Britain. Saleh and the other inhabitants at the centre are permitted to exercise in the woodland area surrounding the centre. However, they are advised by the staff not to wander too far into the countryside as “it gets cold out there at night and some of you lads aren’t used to that” (43). Saleh had been prepared for the cold because when he arrived in Britain in November, he knew that it would get even colder recalling that “Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow was not until February or March and everything was frozen then” (44). This reference to Napoleon’s disastrous 1812 invasion of Russia is ironic and ambivalent. Saleh’s knowledge of European history reflects his colonial education. On the one hand, he ironically homogenises Europe by invoking the notion of a “European” climate when, in reality, the weather conditions in Russia and Britain are vastly different. Also, by referring to Napoleon who had colonised or occupied most of mainland Europe in the nineteenth century, the novel draws attention to the long history of territorial conflicts *within* Europe itself and challenges the notion of a monolithic European identity.

The detention centre itself is described as a series of warehouses. According to Saleh, these “sheds that accommodated us could once just as easily have contained sacks of cereal or bags of cement or some other valuable commodity that needed to be kept secure and out of the rain” (43). In contrast to these “valuable” commodities, Saleh describes himself and his fellow detainees as a “casual and valueless nuisance that had to be kept in restraint” (43). The centre is populated by men from Algeria, Ethiopia, Sudan and Angola who were housed in

one warehouse and men from South Asia, India and Sri Lanka in another warehouse. This policy of segregation is consistent throughout the centre. Saleh also discerns a racial hierarchy which pervades the asylum process. Noticing the tense relationship between a fellow detainee at the detention centre, Alfonso, an Angolan and the Algerian detainees, Saleh muses that the Algerians perceived Alfonso as a “Black man, a lesser son of Adam than them, capable of only a subservient rage and unreflecting resilience” (61). The visible marker of difference in the form of skin colour makes individuals of African descent a target in the biopolitical state. The racialised body is recognised as different and is potentially disruptive to the social order. For instance, Saleh learned of a centre for Nigerians “under lock and key in an old castle in the frozen north away from human habitation” (44). In the novel, Nigerian immigrants are isolated for the safety of the general public as Saleh is informed that the British authorities considered them “too much trouble” (44). In the detention centre, migrants are ranked and reduced to “bare life,” defined by geographic location, separated from their female family members and stripped of what little belongings they have. Throughout his stay, Saleh was afraid to admit that he could speak English. Although there were no “locked gates or armed guards” (42) at the centre, he was concerned that revealing his ability to speak English would “infuriate the doorkeepers of this estate” (43).

By the Sea suggests that the detention centre or camp constitutes a part of the modern state. Saleh Omar had spent time in prison camps in Zanzibar only to be incarcerated again once he came to Britain. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben depicts “the camp” or “detention centre” as a permanent spatial arrangement which remains outside the normal legal order. He regards the camp as the “*nomos* of the political space in which we are still living” (166). It is important to note that Agamben’s views on politics and ‘the camp’ developed from his reading of Carl Schmitt’s *Political Theology* (1922). While *nomos* is now generally translated as ‘the law’ or ‘the norm,’ Schmitt utilised *nomos* primarily as a *spatial* term as it derives

from *nemein* which means ‘to divide’ and ‘to pasture.’ *Nomos* refers to the production of political order through spatial regulation and orientation.²⁹ As I mentioned in the introduction, Agamben argues that the camp arises out of a prolonged *state of exception* and is akin to martial law. He traces the history of states of exception in Europe, focusing, in particular, on Nazi Germany; however, as I argue in the next chapter, the mechanisms of control associated with “the camp” originated on the colonial plantation. In *State of Exception*, Agamben suggests that “bare life” is dispersed throughout modern society to such an extent that any life can become “bare life,” where the distinction between nature and law, bios and zoe collapse.³⁰ In other words, in the biopolitical state, sovereign power can be imposed upon any other “undesirable” members of the population including gypsies, welfare recipients, criminals, mentally-ill patients and ethnic minorities.³¹

Early in the novel, Saleh wonders if it is possible to transcend the boundaries imposed upon an individual from the outside world. The social controls exerted upon individuals in the biopolitical space leaves little scope for personal autonomy and self-determination:

I feel defeated by the overbearing weight of the nuances that place and describe everything I might say as if a place already exists for them and a meaning has already been given to them before I utter them. I feel that I am an involuntary instrument of another’s design, a figure in a story told by someone else. Not I. Can an I ever speak of itself without making itself sound heroic, without making itself seem hemmed in, arguing against an inarguable, rancoring with an implacable? (68-9)

Saleh’s experience of the immigration system suggests that the “overbearing weight” of social, racial and cultural prescriptions imposed on him make him feel like “an involuntary instrument of another’s design.” He articulates the difficulty he encounters in establishing a

space for self-creation. He acknowledges his lack of control over his own narrative and his unwillingness to submit to being “a figure told in a story by someone else.”

Arguably, the above passage refers to the oppressiveness of predominantly white spaces which circumscribe black bodies. Moreover, the passage echoes Frantz Fanon’s description of the paradigmatic encounter between the black man and white man in *Black Skins, White Masks* (1986). Here Fanon argues that the white man has constructed the concept of blackness so when he is encountered by a white person, he encompasses his body, his race and ancestors. He is not perceived as an individual but as a black man in a white space:

I am given no chance, I am over-determined from without... I am the slave not of the ‘idea’ that others have of me but of my own appearance...And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. *I am fixed.* (Fanon’s italics)
(87)

Saleh Omar’s racial difference is a visible marker which confirms the “whiteness” of the space he occupies. As Sara Ahmed has argued in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006)—a text influenced by Fanon’s work on the phenomenology of race— spaces “acquire the *skin* of the bodies that inhabit them” (Ahmed’s emphasis) (132). In most western societies, for instance, public spaces are generally “orientated around whiteness” (133) which makes “non-white bodies uncomfortable and feel exposed, visible and different when they take up this space” (133). The hypervisibility of blackness in white space leads to “a phenomenology of being stopped” (139) or, of having an individual’s mobility restricted. Black bodies can be curtailed by racism whereas “white bodies are comfortable as they inhabit spaces that extend their shape” (134).

However, I argue that Saleh reconfigures and recreates the space of the camp; for instance, as I discuss later on, his silent protest is a form of resistance which points to the

possibility of a different, more autonomous space, which is not designated to him or imposed upon him. Ultimately, he extricates himself from the biopolitical controls that attempt to govern his movements. Therefore, in contrast to the negative biopolitics or thanatopolitics outlined by Agamben and Foucault, *By the Sea* emphasises the mutability of space and the possibility of designating new spaces. For example, despite the hard and oppressive atmosphere at the detention centre, Saleh forms a bond with Alfonso, an Angolan who gifts him with a white towel when Saleh leaves the centre. Alfonso was a political activist who was involved with “Unita’s cause in the war” (44) in Angola. This reference to Unita demonstrates the connection between the anti-colonial struggle against the Portuguese in Angola and contemporary migration, underlining the link the novel traces between colonialism and globalisation. Interestingly, while the detention centre is supposed to regulate and control the movement of migrants, the novel suggests that Alfonso *prefers* to remain segregated from English people. He insisted on remaining at the detention centre until he finished his book, ironically suggesting that assimilating into English life would contaminate his thought processes:

He had been in the camp, the barracks as he preferred to call it, for several weeks.

He refused to be moved, saying he needed the seclusion and the rural air to finish the book he was writing. If he went and mingled with the English in the streets and spent all his evenings in their pubs watching football on TV, he would lose the edge of his recollections and there would be no point to anything he had done.

He liked it there in the barracks among his rootless brethren, thank you. (44)

Alfonso does not place any value on English culture; in fact, he adopts an almost snobbish attitude towards it. He has no interest in football and he does not want to go to pubs or watch television. Ironically, he intimates that these ‘stereotypical’ pastimes of English people would lessen his mental acuity and potentially cause him to “lose the edge of his recollections.”

Arguably, then, the detention centre as ‘non-place’ is reappropriated and de-territorialized by Saleh and Alfonso. By conceiving the camp as a “barracks,” Alfonso reconfigures this space and claims authority over it. By representing himself as a soldier or activist in Angolan civil war rather than a refugee or asylum seeker, Alfonso regains control of his personal narrative and, in doing so, resists the forms of categorisation imposed by the British state. Saleh notices that there is a greater sense of community among the “rootless” migrants in the detention centre than in the B&B, where Saleh is temporarily housed while his application for asylum is processed. Saleh enjoyed his time with the detention centre migrants “whose lives were deepening [him]” (59) and was reluctant to leave, claiming that he “did not feel ready to be rescued yet from these only just visible lives” (45). In this way, the migrants perform a type of counter-politics by transforming the space of the camp.

Furthermore, the depiction of Saleh and Alfonso in *By the Sea* has resonance with contemporary political and philosophical discourses which reformulate migratory movements into a positive biopolitics. In their book *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri chart the progress of what they describe as a new form of imperialism associated with economic globalisation. They discuss the major shift in global power relations contrasting the disciplinary conception of traditional imperialism and the thoroughly biopolitical nature of globalisation. While colonialism enforced rigid identity and territorial boundaries, modern empire—in the form of economic globalisation—emphasises uniformity deploying more subtle institutionalised methods of control. For Hardt and Negri, genuine political citizenship or democracy does not exist; modern states operate through policing not politics. Policing involves the deployment of prevention and repression through the control and management of populations which is aimed at constructing a social equilibrium. Specifically, Hardt and Negri argue that modern empire constructs relations of exploitation often along racial and gendered lines which are indirectly more violent and veiled than during colonialism. However, they

also claim that empire needs migrants in order to proliferate and expand so that the power of the migrant actually materialises within the paradox of empire.

Hardt and Negri characterise the ethnic diversity of migrants as a clear threat to the conformism and “universalism” associated with globalisation, so empire seeks to regulate and control the movement of migrants. Moreover, the flows and circulation of people associated with global capitalism produces political and ethical transformations which ultimately initiates multiple modes of resistance. Despite the increase in border security and surveillance, they suggest that the movement of migrants cannot be completely curtailed. Migrants constantly overflow and “designate new spaces” (397), establishing “new residences” (397). Gurnah’s novel similarly illustrates that autonomous movement by migrants undermines the mechanisms by which states regulate movement across borders. For instance, in *By the Sea*, Latif Mahmud enters Britain without a passport and Saleh Omar obtains a passport with stolen identification papers. Hardt and Negri describe migratory groups as “the multitude” (60). These individuals or groups are the “creative subjectivities of globalisation” (60) which are in constantly in motion and “impose continual global reconfigurations” (60). For Hardt and Negri, the role of the multitude in infiltrating borders and manoeuvring into new spaces potentially counteracts capitalist networks of power and spatial management:

A new geography is established by the multitude as the productive flows of bodies define the rivers and ports. The cities of the earth will at once become great deposits of co-operating humanity and locomotives for circulation, temporary residences and networks of mass distribution of living humanity. (397)

Through circulation, migrants reappropriate space and gain the power to affirm their autonomy, constructing new freedoms through a “widespread, transversal territorial appropriation” (398).

While the novel illustrates the potential of the migrant to create new spaces, it ironically subverts images of the “camp,” ultra-nationalism and racist biopolitics, described by Hardt and Negri. The novel reverses colonial hierarchies when Saleh leaves the detention centre and is relocated to an English home. He describes the house as a “dungeon with its twisting stairways and eccentric bawabs from whom I sensed danger and neglect” (59). Ironically, Saleh has a snobbish attitude towards his host Celia and he describes his fear of contamination while living with her, inverting the racist, segregationist principles of the biopolitical state and evoking “camp” imagery. Her house has not been cleaned regularly and the upholstery is described by Saleh as smelling of “vomit and semen and spilt tea” (56). The bed sheets in his room had been slept in previously and Saleh was reluctant to sit on the bed “out of an irrational fear of contamination, not just fear of disease but of some inner pollution” (56). The supper of beans that Celia provided was also his staple diet in the internment camps in Zanzibar and, mirroring his experience in those camps, Saleh has diarrhoea. He is then unable to perform his ablutions in the unsanitary bathroom. Similarly, in a repeat of his experience in the internment camps, Celia does not provide regular meals for her guests and Saleh spends the first few days in her care in a state of constant hunger. Saleh ironically “others” the British home and its inhabitants, describing it as a “zoo” (59) tainted with an “atmosphere of neglect and cruelty” (55).

Of course, Celia’s treatment of Saleh is also an example of othering. She does not perceive him as an individual and treats him with neglect. For instance, she fails to remember Saleh’s name Mr Shaaban (which is, in fact, a pseudonym), addressing him with a variant of this name (Mr Showness, Mr Showboat) every time she greets him. Arguably, these names also allude to the hypervisibility of racialised individuals in a predominantly white society. She conveys her suspicious and intolerant attitude when she tells Saleh that “he will have to learn English... it’s a strain having you look at me like that and not even know what you’re

thinking” (58). Commenting on Celia’s indifference towards him, Saleh notes “no one was concerned whether I ate or not, whether I was well or ill, whether I rejoiced or grieved” (59). Out of desperation, Saleh decides to perform the prayer “Ya Latif, O Gentle, O Gracious” which he and his fellow inmates in the Zanzibar camps regularly recited “at times of illness and anxiety” (59).

In a reference to the history of internal conflicts within Europe, Celia points out that the British landscape has changed with the increase of so many migrants. She recalls that her first experience of immigration was “not until the Italian prisoners after the war” (54) when she was a young girl. However, the novel points to the role of British foreign policy in generating the influx of migrants. For instance, Celia’s partner, Mick—a man in his seventies—lived in what was formerly known as British Malaya. He rarely speaks and spends his days watching a muted television. Celia attributes his silence to his traumatic experience of Japanese occupation of British Malaya in World War Two. This reference to the history of colonialism and fascism is ironic since *By the Sea* suggests that, decades after World War Two, racism has become institutionalised in government agencies in Britain and fascist ideology is clearly evident in attitudes to migrants. Moreover, Saleh reflects on the banality of racist violence and discrimination when he recalls a photograph he had seen of three Jewish men in Vienna—presumably taken prior to World War Two—on their knees scrubbing the pavement and surrounded by a goading crowd:

People of all ages, mothers and fathers, grandfathers and children, some leaning on bicycles, others carrying shopping bags, standing, smiling in their ordinary respectability, while those three men were degraded in front of them. Not a swastika in sight, just ordinary people laughing at the humiliation of three Jews (231).

The “ordinary respectability” of the onlookers in this passage reflects the normalisation of violence and exclusion during states of exception. In Nazi Germany, Jews were perceived as constituting a biological threat to the purity of the German race and the pogroms and subsequent elimination of Jewish people living in Germany exemplifies the thanatopolitical outcome when racist and nationalist ideologies intersect with biopolitics.³² In the novel, Saleh feels an affiliation with those who have experienced violence and injustice, stating that “the image of their misery and pain echoes in my body and makes me ache with them” (231). Saleh’s empathy with other oppressed people transcends racial, spatial and even temporal boundaries, suggesting the rise of new forms of transnational identity and belonging.

By the Sea also links the segregation of Muslim and Roma communities in Europe with recent incidents of genocide and ethnic cleansing in Eastern Europe and Africa. For instance, Celia refers to the prevalence of street protests against refugees and asylum seekers in the UK by right-wing, nationalist, political organisations:

Now those foreigners are everywhere with all those terrible things happening in their own countries. It didn’t use to be like this. I don’t know the rights and wrongs of it, but we can’t just turn them away, can we. We can’t just say go back to your own horrible country and get hurt; we’re too busy with our own lives. If we can help them I think we should. Be tolerant, I can’t understand these people who demonstrate in the streets saying whatever about asylum seekers. And those national front marches, I can’t bear those fascists. It didn’t use to be like that but what can we do? We can’t send them back to those horrible places. (54)

Celia refers to the National Front’s involvement in the protests highlighting the way modern democracy—which promotes territorial and exclusionary values such as property rights and individualism—legitimises racist values.³³ However, her opposition to right-wing protests is conceived in very general terms without any concrete details. She describes racist incidents

“in those countries” and fascist demonstrators saying “whatever” about refugees. Celia also casually and vaguely refers to these countries as “those horrible places.” The reference to the right-wing protestors refers to the proliferation of what Paul Gilroy, echoing Agamben, describes as “camp” values in British society.

In *Against Race* (2001), Gilroy emphasises the relationship between the sacralisation of the modern political sphere and biopower. He discusses the increase of neo-fascist activity in modern Europe. Arguing the politics is conceived as “a dualistic conflict between friends and enemies” (82), Gilroy argues that “camp mentalities” (83) in modern Britain are constituted and fortified by “the lore of blood, bodies and the fantasies of absolute cultural identity” (83). He describes the ultra-nationalistic ideology which underpins neo-fascist activity and typifies the camp mentality:

Citizenship degenerates in soldiery and the political imagination is entirely militarised. The exaltation of war and spontaneity, the cults of fraternity, youth and violence, the explicitly anti-modern sacralisation of the political sphere and its colonisation by civil religion involving uniforms, flags, mass spectacles, all underline that these camps are a truly martial phenomenon. (82)

The novel echoes Gilroy’s argument that in our globalised world, which promotes uniformity, the threat of fascism manifests as racism. Ultra-nationalism no longer exists at the periphery but informs mainstream political issues such as immigration policy.³⁴

However, *By the Sea* extends Gilroy’s analysis and situates camp values within the British home. Celia’s nationalistic sentiments about British moral superiority reinforce the racial hierarchy within Europe. For her, Britain is a morally and politically superior safe haven for refugees from Europe and beyond. She is not cognizant of the complex history of conflict in former colonies which has led to asylum seekers travelling to Britain in search of a new life. In her view, Britain has, historically, come to the aid of other countries and she tells

Saleh that Britain “didn’t discriminate against [other countries] when we helped them during the war... We helped everybody” (51). Interestingly, Celia associates Britain’s military superiority in World War Two with moral superiority. Helping other countries is associated with military intervention and British identity is connected to displays of military strength. This resonates with Gilroy’s claims about the relationship between nationalism, militarism and the concept of identity in modern Britain.

At the B&B, Saleh encounters two other asylum seekers: Ibrahim from Kosovo and Georgy from the Czech Republic. The novel suggests that migrants who deviate from a supposedly white, Christian “European” identity on the basis of racial, religious or ethnic difference are discriminated against during the asylum process. The experience of the white, Christian Europe-based asylum seekers is prioritised and deemed more pressing in the eyes of the British state and its citizens like Celia. She is welcoming and sympathetic towards Georgy and Ibrahim and they seem to have an amiable relationship with her. While Saleh is somewhat alienated at the B&B and finds it difficult to understand the callous indifference of his fellow residents:

How could they know that I had not been witness or victim to degradations and violence that would at least have required their humane silence? Nobody had swung a baseball bat into my face, but how could they know and how could they know that I had not witnessed even worse? After whatever horrors they had been through, how could they stop knowing that such horrors could happen to anyone?

(53)

Both Georgy and Ibrahim display an antipathy towards Saleh, making derogatory comments about his skin colour and his Muslim faith. Saleh is ostracised as a non-European and a black man whose asylum application is deemed less than legitimate in comparison to their own as white Europeans. Saleh comments: “I suspected that they did not think me worthy of their

tragedies” (61). Georgy and Ibrahim consider Saleh to be an inferior human being. They habitually refer to him as “black man” rather than addressing him by his name.

Like Saleh, Georgy and Ibrahim are also fleeing from persecution in their respective homelands. Celia informs Saleh that Ibrahim’s life was in danger from those “terrible, terrible Serbs and their blood lust” (50). Georgy and his family were the victims of racially-motivated hate crimes and, consequently, the family sought asylum in Britain.³⁵ Georgy had been badly beaten by neo-fascists and acquired some sort of brain injury. Saleh is informed that several attempts have been made to deport Georgy but “the doctors make a fuss so the immigration leave him alone for a while” (50). Georgy is reduced to “bare life” by the immigration authorities and the medical profession; he is defined entirely by his injury.³⁶ He is recognised by the state through his injury and his asylum application depends upon his status of the body as mentally or physically damaged.³⁷ He cannot work in the UK and is separated from his family. He is not moved into a permanent residence or assimilated into mainstream British society. He remains indefinitely at the B&B. However, if a doctor decides he is well enough, he can be deported to the Czech Republic. The British immigration authority does not want to grant him residency and it is not safe for him to return home.

For philosophers of biopolitics such as Agamben and Roberto Esposito, the doctor *as* sovereign is arguably the most dangerous and ambivalent conception of biopolitics as thanatopolitics, which operates inside and outside the *state of exception*. The role of the doctor as determining the friend or enemy of the state is depicted through Georgy in *By the Sea*.³⁸ The suffering body becomes a source of legitimacy in the asylum process and this is the ultimate reduction of the social to the biological or “bare life.” Fundamentally, Georgy’s situation emphasises the significance of the body as source of political rights.³⁹ In his book *Bios* (2008), Esposito states that the concept of the political supremacy of the physical body escalated during the Nazi euthanasia programme during World War Two and brought about a

“biologisation” (140) of the political/juridical sphere. Doctors wield enormous power in the biopolitical state, categorising individuals as physically defective or healthy. Significantly, biopolitics promotes youth, health, physical strength and vitality. Furthermore, the modern physician—imbued with a moral authority—is charged with the care not only of the individual’s health but with the nation’s health. For Esposito, the role of the doctor in modern biopolitics is no different to the doctor’s role in the totalitarian state:

It is as if medical power and political-juridical power are mutually superimposed over each other through alternating points that are ultimately destined to completely overlap: this is precisely the claim that life is supreme, which provokes its absolute subordination to politics. (140)

Throughout *By the Sea*, Saleh is confronted with repeated assertions about his age, fragility and his body’s general lack of productivity. At the airport, Kevin Edelman chides him about his age: “Why do you want to do this? A man of your age...This is a young man’s game, this asylum business” (11). Again, at the B&B, he receives a message from his legal advisor Rachel Howard. While delivering this message, fellow asylum seeker Ibrahim mocks his age: “She say you are too old. No good. Black man... She want young man” (61). Commenting on the perception of his body as aged and valueless in British society, Saleh reflects that he is “too old to work in a hospital, too old to produce a future England cricketer, too old for anything much except social security, assisted housing and subsidised cremation” (48). The novel invokes the categorisation of migrants as legitimate or illegitimate and illustrates the biopolitical distinction between those migrants who are perceived as valuable and will make a contribution to British society and those who are deemed illegitimate or conceived as valueless.⁴⁰

Saleh’s interactions with the refugee organisation also emphasises the ways that migrants are reduced to “bare life.” Saleh waits impatiently for Rachel Howard, his case

worker, to collect him from the B&B for his debriefing and when she finally arrives, she advises him that she was detained as the refugee organisation was extremely busy dealing with “a ferry ship from Le Havre with 110 Roma people from Romania on board” (63). These nameless refugees—deemed unworthy of asylum—were immediately refused entry to Britain and deported back to Romania. He notices that Rachel appears harried and burdened with an extremely heavy work load. She frequently postpones her meetings with Saleh and cannot devote much time to him, even when she manages to visit. Describing Rachel’s visits, Saleh observes that even “when she does come, she makes it seem that her every day is a hectic dance between duties that she has to leave incomplete” (41). Rachel is overwhelmed by her clients and struggles to engage with them as individuals. Furthermore, Saleh questions the motivations of the NGO workers, Rachel and Jeff. He describes them as detached from their clients and fighting for rights and justice “within their secure citadels” (64). Saleh suggest that Rachel “had not really seen” (46) him and her engagement with him was “turned inwards on the ways and means at her disposal” (46). The novel presents NGOs as neutralising difference between individuals by defining “universal” human rights and needs.

When Rachel briefs Saleh for the first time, she vaguely mentions having contacted “an expert in your area” (65) who will assist the refugee organisation in processing his application and facilitate communication between Saleh and herself. This “expert” is Latif Mahmud who has previously acted as a translator for the Refugee Council. Latif privately expresses his frustration that Kiswahili was perceived by the NGO as an obscure language, spoken “out there” (73) in a country that was “unnameable or unknown” (73), when, in reality, “more people spoke Kiswahili than spoke Greek or Danish or Swedish or Dutch” (73). In his discussion of the role of NGOs in the dissemination of moral values in *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (1995), Zygmunt Bauman argues that wealth and power determine not just economic and political policies but, also, the morality of the global

space. In contemporary society, NGOs now represent morality. The ethical competence of individuals is undermined in favour of “expert” political, legal or religious opinion such as that of NGO members.⁴¹ According to Bauman, aid agencies and NGOs, dissipate anxiety and guilt about societal inequality by removing victims from public view and assigning them a space in the global order, which is really a non-space that is the “camp.” The importance of “expert” opinion in the work of the NGO is aptly illustrated in the novel. When Saleh finally admits that he can speak English, Rachel angrily rebukes him for wasting her time and inconveniencing the “expert” translator who was assigned to his case. Saleh ironically reflects on the role of the “expert” who categorises and studies his area:

An expert in my *area*, someone who has written books about me no doubt, who knows all about me, more than I know about myself. He will have visited all the places of interest and significance in my *area*, and will know their historical and cultural context when I will be certain never to have seen them and will only have heard vague myths and popular tales about them. He will have slipped in and out of my *area* for decades, studying me and noting me down, explaining me and summarising me, and I would have been unaware of his busy existence (Gurnah’s italics). (65)

Rather than being treated as an individual, Saleh is perceived as an object of study, requiring analysis and explication by a person more “expert” than him, someone who can effectively categorise and manage him. This person is highly trained and knows the “historical and cultural context” of Saleh’s life pre-migration. Unbeknownst to its inhabitants, the expert would have “slipped in and out of [the] area for decades” invoking a disembodied, omniscient figure representing western biopolitical authority. Like his earlier experience in the detention centre, Saleh is subject to classification and regulation once more. Saleh comes

to realise that Rachel displays what can be described as benign indifference to his specific situation:

She did not have to listen in silence while stories were told about her, only ring a couple of organisations to see if they had an interpreter for a client who spoke a language she could not name and was too ignorant of the cultural geography of the world to make a guess. It was not even ignorance, but an assurance that in the grand scheme of things it did not matter what language I spoke, since my needs and desires could be predicted and sooner or later, I would learn to make myself intelligible. Or sooner or later, she would find an expert that would make me intelligible. (66)

In this passage, the NGO operates by rendering refugees “intelligible” by predicting “their needs and desires” and by negating difference. Saleh points out that it “did not matter what language” he spoke, as the NGO would provide the necessary tools to “make him intelligible” for Europeans. The passage highlights the superior attitude and paternalism of Western charitable organisations. In the “grand scheme of things,” Rachel was not required to have geographical knowledge about East Africa as she could be assured that Saleh’s background did not matter; he will be made intelligible or categorised so as to conform to European values and norms. This regulation of migrant bodies characterises what Bauman describes as the construction of refugees as “human waste” (40) by modern nation states in his book *Liquid Modernity: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (2007). For him, refugees and asylum seekers are treated indiscriminately without “differences, individualities, idiosyncrasies” (40). Furthermore, refugees as “human waste” have “no need of fine distinctions and subtle nuances unless [they are] earmarked for recycling” (41); in other words, unless they can be usefully deployed by the host nation, refugees are valueless and rendered invisible. Bauman describes humanitarian workers as “an important link in the chain

of exclusion” (40) in the biopolitical state and, by categorising and regulating the migrants in their care, NGOs and humanitarian workers construct migrant identities as suffering, injured or helpless while “gratifying [their] poignant desire for moral righteousness” (40). The concept of morality associated with NGOs gradually unravels in the novel. Ultimately, as I will argue, Saleh Omar’s choice to remain silent represents an alternative mode of ethical engagement.

Significantly, when Rachel asks Saleh why he lied about his ability to speak English, he responds that he “preferred not to” (65) in an allusion to Herman Melville’s *Bartleby the Scrivener*. The novella details the life of Bartleby as recounted by the narrator, an elderly lawyer and Bartleby’s employer in a Manhattan law firm. Bartleby joins the firm as a copyist. However, one day he refuses to proof-read a copied document stating that he preferred not to. Gradually, he performs fewer and fewer tasks around the office, despite the concern and intervention of his colleagues. After some time, the narrator discovers that Bartleby has been living at the office, while peaceably refusing to perform even the most perfunctory task. It transpired that prior to his work as a copyist, Bartleby worked in a dead letter office for the postal service processing undeliverable mail. Rather than confront Bartleby and remove him from the premises, his boss relocates the firm to a different building, leaving Bartleby behind. The lawyer learns from new tenants that Bartleby still occupies his former place of employment months later. Eventually, he is imprisoned and dies of starvation, preferring not to eat. Ultimately, Bartleby’s silent protest functions as a form of refusal and his isolation from the world affords him a sort of freedom. Despite the sadness of his existence, Bartleby’s exercise of extreme self-control liberates him from an externally determined fate.

Arguably, Saleh’s interaction with Kevin Edelman mirrors that of Bartleby and the lawyer. Because of his silence, Edelman could not deport Saleh immediately; he is assessed by the immigration authorities and granted clemency purely because he is unable to speak for

himself. Saleh's refusal to speak becomes a source of empowerment and autonomy.

Discussing the importance of Bartleby's silence with Rachel, Saleh expresses his admiration for the copyist's refusal:

Perhaps you have lost tolerance for that desire for isolation which faith in a spirit's ambition made heroic. So the kind of self-mortifying retreat Bartleby undertakes only has a meaning as a dangerous unpredictability. Especially since the story does not allow us to know what has brought Bartleby to this condition, does not allow us to have sympathy for him. It does not allow us to say yes, yes in the case we understand the meaning of such behaviour and we forgive it. The story only gives us this man, who says nothing about himself or about his past, appears to make no judgement or analysis, desires no reprieve or forgiveness from us, and only wishes to be left alone. (199)

For Saleh, Bartleby's refusal to account for his actions is problematic for readers of the novella living a biopolitical society. His silent stance represents a "dangerous unpredictability" since we do not have an insight in Bartleby's actions, we cannot understand him and he cannot be judged. Bartleby desires isolation and his silence impedes categorisation and classification by society. No one can speak for him or explain his actions.⁴² This "dangerous unpredictability" poses a threat to biopolitical control and has positive connotations suggesting that Bartleby is made unique by his silence because he is outside the parameters of classification and control. It is worth noting that Saleh's speech act would have had very little impact on the success of his asylum application. In fact, he would probably have been deported. In a way, Saleh's silent protest also involves the recognition that, as an asylum seeker, his speech has no political value within mainstream political discourse.⁴³

By the Sea conceives both Bartleby and Saleh's silent protests as an act of resistance or intervention in the relationship between power and speaking, or confessing, in the biopolitical state. In other words, confessing or speaking has an administrative and regulatory function in the management of people.⁴⁴ As Foucault maintains, the confession has been the primary method for the production of truth in the west since medieval times and, arguably, represents a form of disciplinary control in the biopolitical sense. In the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault notes that the confession—which originally had its roots in the Christian pastorate—became secularised and adopted in medicine, psychiatry, education, legal and other administrative bodies from around the nineteenth century onwards. The confessional afforded the confessor the opportunity to establish an identity for him/herself, to demonstrate ties to a particular place and to submit to the will of another for judgement or punishment. Foucault argues that the “truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualisation of power” (59). It can be argued that Saleh's silence has both religious and ethical connotations. Throughout the Christian tradition, as Foucault argues, speaking in order to give an account of oneself or to take responsibility for one's actions is the essence of ethical engagement. Through confession, the individual allows him/herself to be judged by existing moral codes and seeks to atone for any moral failure.

Historically, Bartleby's politics of refusal has been the subject of much philosophical discussion among writers such as Agamben, Derrida, Deleuze, Hardt and Negri. In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri refer to Bartleby's philosophy of refusal describing it as “the beginning of a liberatory politics” (204) which symbolises a crisis in mankind. Moreover, the connection between Agamben's description of *homo sacer* outlined earlier and Hardt and Negri's discussion of Bartleby in *Empire* is discernible in the following passage:

His refusal is so absolute that Bartleby appears completely blank, a man without qualities or, as Renaissance philosophers would say, *homo tantum*: mere man and

nothing more. Bartleby in his pure passivity presents us with a figure of generic being, being as such and nothing more. And in the course of his story, he strips down so much—approximating ever more closely naked humanity, naked life, naked being—that eventually he withers away. (203)

Hardt and Negri evocation of “mere man” or “naked humanity” resembles Agamben’s concept of “bare life.” Like the *homo sacer*, Bartleby is “completely blank, a man without qualities” or “bare life”. Here bare life or *zoe* is reconfigured into a more positive conception.⁴⁵ For Hardt and Negri, Bartleby removes himself from “the relationship of domination” (204) and subverts the sovereign power which reigns over him. Bartleby’s silent protest is a type of militancy and a positive form of biopolitical activity by refusing to be disciplined or controlled by the sovereign power. As Hardt and Negri suggest, Bartleby’s politics of refusal is “so indefinite that it becomes absolute” (203). He occupies the status of “bare life” or *homo tantum* which symbolises his “refusal of authority” (204). Although Bartleby died in prison, his actions were autonomous. Saleh Omar’s silent militancy can similarly be interpreted as a form of resistance against the biopolitical state. It is a negation of the external power by refusing to confess. In the case of Bartleby and Saleh Omar, *zoe* or “bare life” denotes an affirmative, enduring and resilient power of life and represents a transformative power.⁴⁶

In an analysis of Meville’s novella in *The Gift of Death* (2007), Jacques Derrida argues that Bartleby’s act of remaining silent invokes non-repetition, non-substitution and uniqueness. Silence conveys “absolute singularity” (62) which dissipates once words are spoken and one “loses the possibility or the right to decide” (61). Following Kierkegaard, Derrida argues that the ethical engagement implied by speech incites irresponsibility.⁴⁷ It is an ethical responsibility *in general* involving a relation to the universal and the individual should be above the universal:

The first effect or first destination of language therefore deprives me of, or delivers me from, my singularity. By suspending my absolute singularity in speaking, I renounce at the same time my liberty and my responsibility. Once I speak, I am never and no longer myself, alone and unique. This is such a strange contract— both paradoxical and terrifying— that binds infinite responsibility to silence and secret. It goes against what one usually thinks, even in the most philosophical mode. For common sense, just as for philosophical reasoning, the most widely shared presumption is that responsibility is tied to the public and to the nonsecret, to the possibility and even the necessity of accounting for one's words and actions in front of others, of justifying them and owning up to them. Here on the contrary, it appears just as necessarily that the absolute responsibility of my actions, to the extent that it has to remain mine, singularly so, something no one else can perform in my place, implies secrecy. (61)

Traditionally, the truthful confession meant the justification of one's actions in front of others in the confessional, public inquiries or law court. In popular ethical discourse, silence conveys secrecy or even guilt. However, Derrida argues that, by remaining silent, the responsibility belongs to individual alone and no one can take his/her place. The ethical model of silence indicates a responsibility not to the ethical in a general or universal sense but to the absolute. Derrida argues that instead of demonstrating responsibility, the ethical in a general sense incites irresponsibility because "it impels me to speak, to reply, to account for, and thus to dissolve my singularity in the medium of the concept" (61). He argues that absolute responsibility must transcend the notion of ethics in the universal/general sense; it must be an extraordinary responsibility involving sacrifice. This sacrifice involves secrecy; it cannot be explained or justified. In the novel, Saleh's silence constitutes a sacrifice because he puts his own safety at risk so that he can challenge the racist politics of the immigration

system. By remaining silent, he is afforded uniqueness as he has not provided the immigration authorities with the tools to categorise him biopolitically. For instance, Rachel Howard is forced to stop and really see him instead of focusing on the very general rights and policies of the asylum process at her disposal. Consequently, the officialdom and bureaucracy associated with the asylum process is called into question. Arguably, Saleh's silence exposes the fallacy of Europe's ethical responsibility towards the migrant. As argued above, when ethical responsibility is exercised in its general form, individuals lose their singularity.⁴⁸ The law, in the form of the immigration authority, does not engage with migrants as individuals in a meaningful or genuinely ethical way.

However, once Rachel Howard engages with Saleh as an individual, they form a close bond. Saleh learns of her family's history of migration, which Rachel had, in turn, learned from her mother:

Apparently centuries ago we [Rachel's ancestors] lived in Haifa and then became Sephardic in Spain, where centuries later we were expelled to Trieste and then moved to Geneva and then, her Grandfather [Rachel's mother] moved to London at the end of the last century" (204).

The revelation that Rachel's family has also been affected by migration further undermines the concept of a monolithic English identity. On one of her visits, Rachel asks Saleh to visit her mother. She is convinced that they would become friends due to their common interest in books. Rachel's mother collects books about Jewish migration and also has books about "religious songs from Andalusia, Muslim songs" (204) which garners Saleh's interest. Here, the novel underlines the relationship between literature and migration, reinforcing the role of literature in transcending boundaries. Despite her busy schedule, Rachel and Saleh develop a strong friendship and he admits that she had "made me love her like the daughter she reminded me of the first time I met her" (203). In addition, Latif Mahmud and Rachel had

become friends as a result of their respective relationships with Saleh. These relationships, which are not bound by ethnic or national affiliation, undermine hierarchies of race and class associated with modern biopolitical state racism. Ultimately, the novel undermines notions of rootedness and stresses the potential of nomadic subjectivity to develop diverse affiliations and create new spaces.

Gurnah's reference to *Bartleby the Scrivener* and also to *Hamlet* emphasise the transnational function of literature. Indeed, the novel emphasises the role of literature in cultivating forms of belonging and togetherness which override ethnic, religious and national differences. As I suggested earlier, the *Bartleby* story becomes a link between Rachel and Saleh.⁴⁹ In addition, before Saleh's compatriot and old acquaintance Latif Mahmud travels to Europe, he discusses the sudden availability of American literature from the United States Information Service Library in Tanzania in the post-independence period. Latif delighted in frequenting the library as many of these titles were new to him since they were not part of his colonial education:

The books were beautiful: large and heavy, with thick gleaming paper, hard-bound and edged with gilt and silver, their title and author embossed—emblazoned—on the spine and with names our colonial education had never uttered. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Frederick Douglass, Edgar Allen Poe, names that excited a noble curiosity because they were not contaminated by a discourse of tutelage and hierarchy.

(106)

American literature, for Latif, represented freedom from the subjugation and oppression of the British education system. Moreover, as the Tanzanian president became interested in Socialism after independence, the novels of writers such as Anton Chekov and Mikhail Sholokhov became available throughout the country. While I discuss the disciplinary function

of literature in Andrea Levy's novel in the next chapter, I am suggesting here that Gurnah's novel points to the denationalisation of literature. *By the Sea* suggests that literature can become a source of inspiration and hope, while creating an alternative space which is separate from geographic or territorial boundaries.

In her book *The World Republic of Letters*, Pascale Casanova discusses the ways in which literary space "establishes territories and boundaries along lines quite different from those of nations" (101). While arguing that literary space is often defined along national lines, she suggests that it is possible to establish autonomous literary spaces which are free from national concerns. Casanova also argues that revolutionary writers in the west can be "co-opted in turn by the most subversive writers in deprived spaces and their advances incorporated into the body of transnational resources constituted by the work of literary innovators everywhere" (327). These writers do not just reflect national concerns but can be denationalised and their work may be utilised to create alternative spaces and meanings. By making reference to texts such as Melville and Shakespeare, the novel appropriates these texts for the postcolonial tradition and reinterprets them. Arguably, for instance, the incorporation of the Bartleby motif in *By the Sea* provides the ultimate example of the denationalisation of literary space. The comparison between Melville's nineteenth century, white, Christian, American copyist on Wall Street and a twenty-first century, black, Muslim asylum seeker in Britain challenges western concepts of space, time and progress, conveying what Casanova describes as the superseding of "temporalities whether of nations, families or personal experience" (93). Literary texts are transnational and can transgress socially-prescribed norms of race, class and religion; *By the Sea* illustrates this by emphasising transcultural narratives, positive biopower and embodied cartographies as a form of positive reterritorialisation.

In the second half of the novel, the narrative chronologically shifts back to the nineteenth-sixties and Latif's migratory journey is recounted. Here, the novel depicts lack of progress in the ethical treatment of refugees and migrants as Latif's experience mirrors Saleh's later journey in a number of ways. Before settling in England, Latif Mahmud spent time in East Germany and stays at a hostel with several other young African men from Somalia, Ethiopia, South Africa and Egypt. He meets Ali, a young man from Guinea at the hostel. Like Alfonso, Saleh's friend at the detention centre, Ali is characterised as politically active. He was educated in Lyon where he father worked and spoke English well. As a result, he and Latif are able to develop a friendship. Ali's father was an English professor who had returned to Guinea a number of years previously. He became involved in political activism and had been imprisoned in Sékou Touré's jail for three years, after a government clamp-down on political activity by the country's intelligentsia in the nineteen-sixties.⁵⁰ Ali's older brother had also disappeared during the political strife and his mother insisted that Ali move to East Germany to ensure he was not also victimised by the government militia. He then develops a friendship with Elleke and Jan, a German mother and her son. He learns that Elleke came from a town called Most in the former Czechoslovakia. Most had been part of Austria when she was a little girl, before the European map was divided up by war. Elleke and her family then became settlers on a coffee plantation in Kenya until 1938 and this was where she learned English, the language she uses to communicate with Latif. Elleke also speaks Kiswahili which she learned in Kenya. Elleke's migration and the shifting territorial boundaries of her home town convey the arbitrary configuration of space and identity. Elleke's ability to speak English, German and Kiswahili illustrates that cultural appropriation is a two-way process and that her linguistic and cultural identity was also shaped by her experience in Kenya.

Elleke welcomes Latif into her home and washes his foot which has been cut and bloodied, as a result of wearing light shoes in the harsh German winter. She references Greek mythology and tells Latif that she is reminded of the foot-washing passage from Homer's *The Odyssey*. The Greek hero Odysseus returns to Ithaca after the Trojan Wars; however, after a twenty year absence, his wife Penelope does not recognise him. His former nursemaid Euryclea identifies him from a scar on his leg which she notices when washing Odysseus's feet. Elleke asks Saleh if he is familiar with Auerbach who "does such wonderful things with that passage" (128). In an article on *By the Sea* entitled "Terms of Hospitality," David Farrier notes that Auerbach describes foot-washing as "the first duty of hospitality towards a tired traveller" (135, qtd in Farrier). In Homer's *Odyssey*, for instance, Odysseus is welcomed unconditionally as a stranger and is given hospitality and aid by his wife, Penelope. Latif is also given a genuine welcome by Elleke which is based on their commonality as migrants and victims of war as opposed to their differing racial, religious or national affiliations.⁵¹ Gurnah's reference to *The Odyssey* reminds us that hospitality toward strangers is an important part of the European history and culture his tradition of welcoming and tolerance is absent from modern Europe, which is more concerned with border security and the management of populations. Significantly, Auerbach, a Jew who left Germany to escape persecution by the Nazis, was also a migrant.

While Elleke washes Latif's foot, they engage in a conversation about Elleke's time in Kenya and the destruction inflicted on Africa during European colonial expansion. She speaks about the cruelty and arrogance of the colonisers towards the natives, including the colonial discourse of the moral, intellectual and ethnic superiority of the European people:

My father was fond of saying that our moral superiority over the natives was only possible with their consent. All Europeans had to observe the thin line beyond which the mysterious moral authority over the native would vanish, and we

would have to torture and murder to regain it. Poor Papa, he didn't think that it was torture and murder that was committed in our name which gave us that authority in the first place. He thought it was something mysterious to do with justice and temperate conduct, something we acquired from reading Hegel and Schiller and going to mass. Never mind the exclusions and expulsions and the summary judgements delivered with contemptuous assurance. Never mind the regiments and the gaols. It was our moral superiority which made the natives afraid of us. Oh well, we would soon have our share of that and come to understand that philosophy and poetry had only made the riddle grow greater not smaller. (132)

While her father believed that the Europeans were culturally and morally superior, Elleke argues that this 'superiority' and dominance was based on "exclusions," "expulsions," "torture" and "gaols." She alludes to the role of Christian teleology in reinforcing the superiority of mass-going Europeans. While discussing the brutality of the colonial conquest of Kenya in the 1890s, she notes that "we [Europeans] would soon have our share of that," linking the violence of colonialism to the later violence during fascism in Europe. Interestingly, this critique of European colonial policy is delivered—through the medium of English—by a former coloniser who later became a victim of fascism to a formerly colonised person who has now become a migrant. Elleke also refers to the expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia, Sudeten and Silesia after the war. As she recalls, cities like Dresden were in ruins with "thousands of refugees crawling over [them]" (137). In this way, the novel highlights the repetitive cycle of totalitarian violence associated with the racism and capitalist biopolitics of Western Europe and, also, the instability and precariousness of territorial borders and ethnic identities.

Shortly after arriving in East Germany, Latif Mahmud decides to forego his career in dentistry and travels around Europe. He settles in Britain and studies literature. When Saleh meets him, Latif is teaching English literature at a university. When Latif is first introduced in the novel, he is on his way to work and is accosted on a London street by a middle-aged white English man who calls him a “grinning blackamoor” (71). Latif researches the history of the term and discovers that it first appeared around 1501 and was utilised in literary works by authors such as Sidney and Shakespeare. However, the term is ambivalent and initially, Latif is outraged that the language he speaks everyday is used to denigrate him. He reflects angrily: “this is the house I live in, I thought, a language which barks and scorns at me behind every third corner” (73). In her essay “Between Oriental and Blacks So Called 1688-1788,” Felicity A. Nussbaum examines the usage of terms such as black and moor in British literature from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She argues that, initially, the term was applied inconsistently without regard to geography. However, after the development of the slave trade, racial terminology, including the term “blackamoor,” was instrumental in the development of hierarchies “of human difference that are identified with given geographical origins and locations” (144). Nussbaum further argues that abolitionist movements, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, fostered a fixed concept of blackness in order to locate the subject of emancipatory politics. As I will discuss in detail in the second chapter, abolitionist discourse—which is generally associated with moral and social progress in Europe, evoking enlightenment ideals of liberty and equality—relied upon the biopolitical construction of racial stereotypes. Literature contributed to the production and dissemination of biopolitical models of racial identity and Latif Mahmud notes how Western letters historically homogenised racial identity in stereotypes that originated in the age of colonial expansion:

There it was, the word [blackamoor] that had been in print since 1501, and since then has slipped from the pen of such worthies of English letters as the humane Sidney, the incomparable W. Shakespeare, the prudent Pepys and a host of other minor luminaries. It lifted my spirits. It made me feel that I had been present in all those strenuous ages, not forgotten, not rooting and snorting in a jungle swamp or swinging naked from tree to tree, but right there, grinning through the canon for centuries". (73)

Here Latif surprisingly observes that the presence of the term 'blackamoor' in the works of these canonical European writers "lifted [his] spirits." If nothing else, it points to the presence of black people in Europe for centuries and to the contribution of black people to European history and culture. At the same time, the passage points to the role of the western literary canon in disseminating negative and disciplinary images of black people. Since stereotypes of black identity have been produced by these white male "luminaries," it can be inferred that literature plays an important role in preserving and naturalising racist ideology, a point I discuss in greater detail in the next chapter. *By the Sea* highlights the disciplinary function of literature but, at the same time, suggests that it has the potential to undermine biopolitical norms of identity by providing alternative geographies based on migration and cultural exchange.

The novel emphasises multiple forms of belonging brought about through circulation and nomadic subjectivity. In her article "Writing Wider Worlds," Tina Steiner suggests that Gurnah's fiction emphasises that "pockets of relation are possible where boundaries of identity are crossed, whether they are national, religious, or any other kind" (133). There are many examples of what Steiner describes as "careful palimpsests of relation" (133) throughout the novel. I have already discussed Latif's friendships with Elleke and Ali and, also, Saleh's bond with Alfonso at the detention centre. Significantly, the English characters

that represent the British state and its administrative and policing bodies—such as Kevin Edelman and Rachel Howard— all have ethnically diverse cultural heritage associated with stateless migratory populations. Similarly, Latif Mahmud experiences this ethnic diversity when he arrives in Plymouth harbour in the nineteen sixties, after his travels in Europe. He is questioned by a policeman at the harbour named Walter. Walter refers to his family's Roma ancestry, asking Latif if he visited Hungary stating: "My old mum used to say there's gypsy in us" (139). The various ethnic and cultural lineages which contribute to the formation of the state counteract the biopolitical ideal of pure blood or absolute identity. These characters illustrate the ways in which the biopolitical framework of the state has been usurped and the rigid codes of identification and control of movement have been subverted. Rather than simply espousing a monolithic concept of Europe, the characters in the novel are attuned to their diverse lineage.

By the Sea depicts a variety of transcultural identifications, promoting alternative models of community which transcend racial, national and religious identities. The novel undermines the norms and prohibitions associated with biopolitics which demonstrating the ways in which sovereign power and the camp have developed and mutated in line with changing socio-economic and political conditions. For instance, as I have argued, the experiences of the migrant characters in the novel emphasises the emergence of sovereign power in modern immigration policy, the manifestation of camps in the form of detention centres, security-driven detainment in airports and other border crossings and the rise of camp mentalities in modern democracies. *By the Sea* exposes the ethical indifference of modern nation states and NGOs, suggesting that modern power operates by controlled inclusion, echoing the views put forward by Giorgio Agamben and Zygmunt Bauman. The novel calls for a reformulation of modern political and ethical discourse which is heretofore based on the exclusionary model of the Christian sovereign and the cultural norms of dominant capitalist

societies. Furthermore, the novel also suggests that the illegal or uncontrolled movement of migrants can undermine sovereign power.

The novel demonstrates that it is possible for migrants to challenge biopolitical control; the subterranean movement, territorial reappropriation and acts of refusal described in *By the Sea* point to a space beyond existing structures of political power. Finally, the novel emphasises the transnational function of literature and suggests that the way literature connects people regardless of their background could be a model for rootless belonging. Concomitantly, by illustrating the potentiality of “bare life” or *zoe*, the migrant narratives outlined in the novel serve to overcome traditional disciplinary function of literature and espouse a more autonomous concept of literary space. The politics of refusal illustrated by Saleh suggest that, even in the supposedly invisible non-space of the camp, a territorial and political reappropriation and reterritorialisation can occur. His actions suggest that the condition of ‘bare life’ has a liberatory potential by reconfiguring concepts of morality, democracy and cultural identity which form the basis of modern European society. In the next chapter on Andrea Levy’s *The Long Song*, I will discuss the role of literature as a disciplinary tool of biopower by analysing the ways in which racial hierarchies were instituted on the colonial plantation and reified in colonial literature.

3. Biopolitics, Literary Space and Geographies of Domination in Andrea Levy's *The Long Song*

This chapter examines the relationship between the human and material geographies of plantation slavery and the disciplinary function of literature in both the production of biopolitical norms and the construction of hierarchies of human life. In the previous chapter, I described the biopolitical regulation of bodies in twenty-first century England; in this chapter, I argue that Andrea Levy's novel *The Long Song* connects slavery, its spatial politics and its various literary and socio-political discourses to modern geopolitical and literary space. A biopolitical reading of the novel suggests that the literatures that emerged from the plantation, including slave narratives, missionary pamphlets and travel literature, reflect the hierarchical structure of eighteenth and nineteenth century social and literary space and, also, of modern categories of spatially-regulated human life. The novel examines the ways in which space is shaped and dominated by white Europeans and, it also interrogates the mechanisms of power utilised by white hegemony to construct and maintain "normative" human and material geographies. Equally, Levy's novel is concerned with the reclamation of "black" material and literary spaces.

The Long Song documents the abolition of slavery in 1833 and the subsequent period of apprenticeship—when ex-slaves worked as indentured labourers for their former owners—a system which was finally abolished in 1838. The plot concentrates on the experiences of July, a house slave on a sugar plantation called Amity in Jamaica in the 1830s. July is the novel's narrator; she is born after her mother Kitty, a field slave, is raped by the plantation overseer, Tam Dewar. While she is still a child, she is procured by Caroline Mortimer—the sister of the plantation owner John Howarth—to keep the latter company and to eventually work as her lady's maid. July is renamed Marguerite by her mistress who has just arrived from England following the death of her husband.

The novel also gives an account of the Christmas Rebellion of 1831 when a revolt broke out in the west of the island led by the enigmatic Baptist preacher, Sam Sharpe. Fourteen whites were killed and during the subsequent suppression of the slave rebels by the British militia, five hundred blacks were killed or executed. In the novel, July becomes pregnant with the son of a black free man named Nimrod, with whom she has a brief relationship during the rebellion. Knowing she would be unable to raise the child herself, she leaves him in a cradle on the doorstep of a white Baptist preacher, James Kinsman. Kinsman and his wife Jane adopt the boy, naming him Thomas. They return to England where Thomas receives a Christian education. Meanwhile, July works at Amity for most of her adult life. She has a second child, a daughter named Emily, with Amity's new owner Robert Godwin, who is married to Caroline Mortimer. Unable to successfully agree on the conditions of work with former slaves in the post-abolition period, Robert and Caroline decide to return to England. Unbeknownst to July however, they bring Emily with them, passing her off as their daughter. July is distraught and remains at the abandoned plantation until she is reunited with her son many years later. As a freed woman, she is encouraged to record her experience of slavery by her son, Thomas Kinsman. He runs a publishing company in Jamaica after training in the publishing house of Linus Gray in London and acts as editor for July's narrative.

In this chapter, I examine the role of literature in mapping and regulating material space and the bodies within those spaces. *The Long Song* alludes to the ways in which literary production in the nineteenth century shaped English national identity and defined it against racialised bodies in the colonies. Additionally, the biopolitical regulation of slaves' bodies on the plantation site points to the production of "bare life" and zones of exception in the colonies before biopower became part of the mechanisms of state power in twentieth century Europe, which I discussed in the previous chapter. However, this chapter is primarily concerned with the disciplinary function of literature and the role of literary texts in

contributing to a racist hierarchy of the human. As *The Long Song* demonstrates, literary production has an important biopolitical function because it contributes to the spatial organisation of people and places.

Although Foucault does not discuss literature in his analysis of biopolitics, it is important to note that, for him, biopower is not only exercised through spatial regulation and population control, but also through the regulation of knowledge. In *Society Must be Defended*, he refers to the relationship between knowledge and discipline. He argues that biopolitical society was shaped by various apparatuses of knowledge such as medical, philosophical and scientific discourses which functioned as technologies of power before being normalised and ratified as 'true' knowledge. These medical, philosophical, political and, as I argue, literary discourses are tools of biopower which create and reinforce biopolitical norms. These various systems of knowledge effectively operate as a supplementary disciplinary power. As Foucault observes, biopolitical society emerges from a series of regulations and disciplines enacted on the populations of states by various administrative, social, cultural and legal bodies and, at the same time, from the administration and hierarchicalisation of knowledge which underlines disciplinary power:

The eighteenth century was the century when knowledges were disciplined, or when, in other words, the internal organisation of every knowledge became a discipline which had, in its own field, criteria of selection that allowed it to eradicate false knowledge or non-knowledge. We also have forms of normalisation and homogenisation of knowledge-contents, forms of hierarchicalisation and an internal organization that could centralise knowledges around a sort of de facto axiomatisation. So every knowledge was organised into a discipline. (182)

Biopower configures certain modes of thinking and hierarchies of knowledge which promote specific ways of understanding the world and rendering it intelligible. To possess the ability to create knowledge and inscribe truths is an important social, cultural and political power, linked to the production of subjectivity. For example, as I argue, the production of literary texts performs an important biopolitical function in construction of “normative” subjects.

Interestingly, the spatialising function of literature is best illustrated by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1997), when he discusses the connection between the disciplinary power associated with colonialism and the production of literary texts. He argues that the novel had a regulatory social function in western European societies. As Said suggests, novels assign specific meanings to certain spaces and function as instruments of territorialisation:

The appropriation of history, the historicization of the past, the narrativization of society, all of which gave the novel its force, include the accumulation and differentiation of the social space, space to be used for social purposes. (93)

In the nineteenth century, for instance, the English novel stressed the continuing existence of England as an ideological concept and normalised the role of Britain as a dominant imperial power.⁵² The image of Britain as an autonomous, insular and self-sufficient island at once reinforced British cultural superiority and ideologically separated Britain from its supposedly uncivilised colonies.⁵³ Said argues that the English novel, in particular, emphasised white, Judeo-Christian, predominantly male values associated with imperialism, which ultimately defined English national identity. He suggests that novels played an important role in the “consolidation of authority” (92) and novelists such as Dickens, Thackeray and Austen wrote with an exclusively western audience in mind. Passing references to overseas territories reinforced British authority and power over literary and geographical space. Novels functioned through the differentiation of the social space, which had an implicitly

geopolitical function of subordinating the colony to the metropolis and the periphery to the centre:

Imperialism and the culture associated with it affirm both the primacy of geography and an ideology about the control of territory. The geographical sense makes projections—imaginative, cartographic, military, economic, historical or in a general sense cultural. It also makes possible the construction of various kinds of knowledge, all of them in one way dependent on the perceived character and destiny of a particular geography. (93)

According to Said, the English novel conveyed a “spatial moral order” (94), emphasising English superiority and reinforced values of “family, property [and] nation” (93). These concepts were positively invested with a strong “spatial hereness” (93) associated with Britain, in stark contrast to the colonies which were perceived by many Britons as uncivilised, expansive terrains yet to be geographically demarcated or imbued with values and culture.⁵⁴

While Said emphasises the role of the novel in upholding the ideologies of the empire, in the previous chapter, I examined Giorgio Agamben’s analysis of the relationship between the figure of life and membership of a national community in his book *Homo Sacer*. It is important to note that Agamben examines the concept of bare life in purely legal terms, suggesting that rights are connected exclusively with national identity.⁵⁵ As he argues, birth is the “immediate bearer of sovereignty” (128) and once the link between natality and nationality is broken, an individual can be reduced to bare life.⁵⁶ However, *The Long Song* problematises Agamben’s Foucauldian biopolitics because his legalistic concept of bare life and political life are indebted to Enlightenment concepts of the human which, as Levy argues, are defined against racialised bodies. As I suggest in this chapter, Levy’s novel complicates the discussion of space, power and race by imaginatively mapping the lives of black slave

women and examining the colonial literature which constructed and regulated black subjectivities for a white readership.

As mentioned in the introduction, Levy's oeuvre is an example of the mapping of black histories which have been erased, displaced or concealed.⁵⁷ *The Long Song* is set in the nineteenth century and is concerned with colonial encounters between white British planters and African slaves. Like *By the Sea*, Levy's novel is concerned with movement, displacement, borders and the mapping of space by marginalised bodies. More specifically, Levy interrogates the relationship between the physical domination and management of a colonised landscape by whites and controlled movements of the inhabitants enslaved there. By inviting readers to question the ethics of existing material and literary spatial representations and by depicting alternative spaces, she generates an imaginative geography which becomes a metonymic site, constantly undermining existing meanings, hegemonic spatial relations and reified geographies.

Significantly, in *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, Katherine McKittrick discusses the relationship between humanness and geography during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, referring to the way that certain geographic stories and certain types of human are reified by dominant western culture, while others are marginalised or displaced. In the introduction to *Demonic Grounds*, she considers the link between black populations and geography which she defines as "space, place and location in their physical materiality and imaginative configurations" (x). She also focuses on the spatial politics of black history and the construction of black subjectivities in order to explore "social lives which are often displaced, rendered ungeographic" (x). By investigating the connection between "geographies of domination (such as transatlantic slavery and racial-sexual displacement) and black women's geographies, (such as their knowledge, negotiations and experiences)" (x), McKittrick analyses the way black populations and their geographies are

concealed by what she terms “rational spatial colonisation and domination: the profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, stories and lands” (x). For McKittrick, the slave body was territorialized on the plantation; it was owned and controlled by an outsider and it was mapped by whites for the purposes of work, punishment, reproduction or resale.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the plantation itself was established by white planters and overseers as a site of total domination where any exertion of autonomy by the slave population was interpreted as a transgression and resulted in severe physical punishment.⁵⁹ Slaves’ lives were spatially regulated through forced movement, violence and the complete deprivation of a private space for self-creation. For instance, as McKittrick argues, slave quarters, plantation homes and fields were sites where the slave body was constantly vulnerable and potentially exposed to violence. These material landscapes, which were controlled by white planters, codified the slave body as captive and incapable of self-government.

However, despite the displacement and marginalisation of black geographies, McKittrick suggests that exploring these geographies opens up new epistemologies and offers an insight into how past spatial histories impact on current unequal geographic conceptions. While slavery differed greatly depending on its location, McKittrick argues that the category of “black woman” during transatlantic slavery has a significant impact on what it means to be human today. Describing both past and contemporary experiences of racist subjugation as spatial acts, she contends that creative acts, such as writing, allow black women to re-spatialise or remap their surroundings. In addition, McKittrick emphasises the “sayability of geography” (24) or the act of naming or expressing place which allows black women to reconceptualise traditional Euro-centric geographic discourses. She suggests that the “site of memory [can] be used to rethink historical geographies” (33) but also to reconfigure contemporary geographic spaces through “mapping the deep poetics of black landscapes” (33). For McKittrick, the production of literary texts may be one way of positioning black

women as subjects who can reconfigure traditional geographic landscapes. She describes literary production as a disclosure of black space: “an interdisciplinary and diasporic analytical opening which advances creative acts that influence and undermine existing spatial arrangements” (24). Producing black fiction involves a “placing of placelessness” (33). McKittrick’s perceives the role of black writers on slavery as “re-placing that which was/is [regarded as] too subhuman, or too irrelevant, or too terrible, to be formally geographic or charted in any way” (34).

Likewise, in his book *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (1989), Hilary Beckles emphasises the significance of gender difference and the specific historical experience of black women in any analysis of Caribbean slavery. As a result of what he terms the “tripartite structure of race, class and gender oppression” (3), black female slaves experienced the “greatest material deprivation and social vulnerability on [plantation] estates” (3). For him, an analysis of female experience of slavery offers “a distinct perspective on the possible parameters of human exploitation” (3). Crucially, Beckles’ study is also concerned with spaces of female resistance and autonomy on the plantation. For example, he describes incidences of autonomous economic activity which allowed female slave a measure of freedom and independence outside the boundaries of the plantation.⁶⁰ He also points to other forms of rebellion and autonomy such as the “manipulation of socio-sexual relations with empowered whites and the preservation of [African] cultural roots” (4) which are often absent from the official historiography of the period.⁶¹ While Beckles stresses the importance of “integrating the specificity of women’s experiences into mainstream methodologies and theoretical constructs” (1), Andrea Levy also discusses the absences of black women’s stories from historical accounts of slavery.

For instance, in an article about the novel entitled “The Writing of *The Long Song*,” Levy discusses the scarcity of “documents and artefacts ...where enslaved people speak of

and for themselves” (5). Throughout her research for the novel, she encountered endemic racism in works from well-known eighteenth and early nineteenth century European writers and philosophers such as Anthony Trollope, Immanuel Kant and David Hume. She presents *The Long Song* as “a way of putting back the [black] voices that were left out” (5) of predominantly white accounts of the period. Levy is concerned with creating an understanding of slavery which is not available through official channels of knowing and with uncovering alternative perceptions of reality which are not included in the archives of dominant cultural accounts and official histories. When discussing her motivation for the novel in an interview with *The Guardian* on January 30th 2010, she pointed out that black British people do not have access to official ancestry records and that the only way to document their slave history “is through fiction.” Fiction, for Levy, is a way of charting an alternative geography of slavery. White Britons could trace their ancestry through two world wars and through Britain’s imperial past. However, immigrants from the Caribbean, whose ancestors were plantation slaves, could not consult family records or official ledgers, which were non-existent for descendants of slavery.⁶² Describing the plantation as a “giant, brutal island factory” (5), Levy, nonetheless, wanted not only to depict the terror and suffering of slaves but also “the chatter and clatter of people building their lives, families and communities, ducking, diving and conducting the businesses of life in appallingly difficult circumstances” (5). The novel examines the way in which slaves re-appropriated the space of the plantation and, in particular, the plantation house through autonomous movements and acts of resistance.

Interestingly, in an editorial for *The Guardian* newspaper on 3rd November 2014 entitled “How I Learned to Stop Hating my Heritage,” Levy alludes to what could be described as the racist biopolitics derived from plantation slavery when she discusses her parents’ experience of the legacy of colonial racism, before they migrated to Britain. She

notes that skin colour had a profound influence on the class system in Jamaica, which was “inherited from colonial times” and because Levy’s family was considered “fair-skinned,” her parents “grew up to believe themselves to be of a higher class than any darker-skinned person.” As a child growing up in England, Levy “was expected to isolate [herself] from darker-skinned people too.” Levy refers to the psychological legacy of racism derived from colonialism which still impacts on black identity in the Caribbean and in Britain, contributing to a racist hierarchy of the human. She recalls how, as a young adult, she learned to confront “what it meant to be black. All those agonies over skin shade. All those silences about where we had come from. The shame. The denial.” Arguably, writing *The Long Song* allowed Levy to explore British Caribbean history through fiction. For her, the relationship between Britain and the Caribbean is a “forgotten history” and there are many Britons—black and white—who are “unaware of the histories that bind us all together.”

As I mentioned in my introduction, *The Long Song* is a neo-slave narrative set between 1830 and 1898 in Jamaica. Neo-slave narratives are modelled on and pay homage to the slave narrative; however, they also interrogate the politics of literary production in the slave narrative. The genre of slave narrative developed from a desire of slaves and ex-slaves to depict the brutality of bondage and to narrate their own stories. In his introduction to *The Classic Slave Narratives* (1987), Henry Louis Gates Jr. states that, in America alone, between 1703 and 1944, over six thousand slaves had related stories of their bondage through interviews, essays and autobiographies. According to Gates, slaves created a genre of literature which “at once testified against their captors and bore witness to the urge of every black slave to be free and literate” (1). The shared themes of the slave narrative genre reflected the “process of imitation and repetition” (2) which came to represent a “communal utterance, a collective tale” (2) and embodied the struggle for freedom and for space

undertaken by both freed and captive slaves. Ultimately, for Gates, the printing press became “the most enduring weapon at their [slaves and former slaves] disposal” (2).

One of the most significant motifs of the narratives was the parallel teleological journey from slavery to freedom with the journey from orality to the acquisition of literacy. In *Figures of Black: Words, Signs and the Racial Self* (1989), Gates argues that until the advent of a literary tradition in the form of the slave narrative, blackness was constructed entirely as a “trope of absence” (21). By producing a narrative, slaves were charting their journeys to freedom and asserting themselves as human subjects.⁶³ Slave narratives such as Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative* (1789) and Mary Prince’s *A History of Mary Prince: a West Indian Slave Related by Herself* (1831) contributed significantly to the abolition of slavery in Britain in 1803.⁶⁴ While Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) was also an important part of the abolitionist campaign against slavery in the United States.

As a genre, slave narratives were characterised by specific themes, motifs and plot structure. Moreover, in order to function as an effective propaganda for the anti-slavery movement, slave narratives constructed a specific representation of slave life which served to humanise the slave for a white readership. Also, narratives were generally chronological with each narrative describing the birth of the slave, his/her early family life, his/her separation from family members, the repeated physical violence endured by the slave and his/her eventual path to freedom.⁶⁵ Indeed, the primary function of the narrative was to depict the brutality and horror of slavery rather than familiarising the reader with an individual slave’s biography. In addition, slave narratives were almost always prefaced by white editors in order to lend credence to the slave’s testimony.

In *To Tell a Free Story* (1986), William L. Andrews argues that a slave could not speak “too revealingly of the individual self, particularly if this did not correspond to white

notions of the facts of black experience or the nature of the negro” (6). For instance, very little information about slaves’ sexual relationships appeared in the narratives because it would offend the sensibilities of white female readers in particular. As Andrews argues, slaves were discouraged by white abolitionists and editors from expressing any individual opinions or desires outside of their accounts of slavery which might risk “alienating white sponsors and readers” (6). He makes the Bakhtinian argument that, in the genre of the slave narrative, the black speaker or writer is always oriented towards the white listener or reader and this discourse “takes place in an environment of alienation” (17). Black autobiography was an attempt to engage with the white world when “black identity and capacity of blacks for reliable discourse” (17) was questioned by the majority of whites in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.⁶⁶ Andrews maintains that, for whites, the most reliable slave narrative were texts that “seemed mimetic, in which the self is on the periphery instead of at the centre of attention, looking outside not within, transcribing rather than interpreting a set of objective facts” (6). The standardised form and content of the slave narratives meant that the individuality of the slave was marginalised in the text and that the slave authors were afforded limited space for self-expression and autonomy.

In addition, North American narratives and Caribbean slave narratives can be differentiated from each other by a number of specific characteristics and conventions. Most importantly, Caribbean narratives were dictated by the slave to a white amanuensis because slaves in the Caribbean were much less likely to be literate or to speak Standard English compared to slaves in North America.⁶⁷ Caribbean plantations were predominantly much larger, had a greater labour force than in the United States and were not white settler colonies. For instance, field slaves on large plantations often had limited interaction with whites and would have spoken a creolised language which would most likely have been incomprehensible to the white plantocracy.⁶⁸ Unlike American planters who travelled to the

colonies to establish a new life for themselves, Caribbean plantation owners often remained in Britain and appointed attorneys and overseers to run their estates.

In her article “Caribbean Slave Narratives: Creole in Form and Genre,” Nicole N. Aljoe discusses the connection between the geography of artificially-created Caribbean societies and the “distinct publication history of Caribbean slave narratives” (2). Following Orlando Patterson and Antonio Benitez-Rojo, Aljoe notes that the island structure of the Caribbean resulted in fragmented, multi-ethnic, culturally-diverse, colonial societies which “developed into new cultural and social forms often referred to as Creole” (2). While North American narratives such as Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* were written in Standard English as “a means of asserting intelligence” (5), the use of Creole in Caribbean narratives foregrounds the oral nature of these texts. Even though Caribbean narratives are typically co-authored by the slave and amanuensis, Aljoe states that it would be remiss to think that narrative control in dictated Caribbean narratives lies completely with the amanuensis or editor. Instead, she emphasises “the oral storytelling of the narrator” (4) and the creative process deployed by the orator to filter and choose precisely what information to reveal to the amanuensis or editor.

Despite Aljoe’s positivist perspective, questions of authenticity and narrative control are central to any analysis of slave narratives. For this reason, the neo-slave narrative genre engages with issues of voice, space and editorial control in the slave narrative genre, questioning relations of power in the fields of cultural and literary production. In his book *Neo-Slave Narratives* (1999), Ashraf Rushdy notes the increase in the publication of novels in the nineteen seventies and eighties in America all of which “assume the form, adopt the conventions and take the first person voice of the antebellum slave narrative” (3). He claims that the neo-slave narrative dialogically engages with the literary form it adopts and also with the contemporary social, cultural and political conditions from which it emerges. In other

words, neo-slave narratives explore the politics of culture by “examining the social origins of the field of cultural production” (18). By adapting the form of the slave narrative, the genre of neo-slave narrative also investigates the inconsistencies, absences and silences in the slave narrative and “parodies, supplements or subverts” (14) the earlier texts. By commenting on “white appropriations of the slave’s voice” (6), these novels also question the concept of authorship and highlight omissions in the western historiographical and cultural tradition which often excluded the views of black people from representations of slavery. Ultimately, neo-slave narratives are “oppositional works” (14) which rewrite the historical slave narrative and interrogate the process of canonicity by challenging the notion that literary production is autonomous from the material interests and relations of power within society.⁶⁹

Moreover, neo-slave narratives by authors such as Toni Morrison, Charles Johnson, Shirley Anne Williams and Ishmael Reed, to name but a few, are specifically concerned with the relationship between the history of slavery in America and “the social significance of contemporary racial identity” (22). In the British context, Levy is one of the few twenty-first century novelists—along with Caryl Phillips—to engage with the history of Caribbean slavery. As a neo-slave narrative, Levy’s novel undertakes what Rushdy describes as a reassessment and a return to “the cultural moment behind the production of a literary text” (18) in order to comment on contemporary cultural and racial politics. In an interview with Susan Alice Fischer in *Andrea Levy: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (2014), Levy discusses the “enormous amnesia” (134) in relation to the history of slavery in Britain and argues that acknowledging and understanding colonial slavery is “very important to who we are as a nation” (134). She also mentions the millions of pounds in compensation received by former slave owners from the British government as a direct result of abolition.⁷⁰ This compensation was subsequently invested in British industry and shaped the British economy

for decades after abolition.⁷¹ As Levy argues, slavery and the wealth derived from it “directly [affects] the Britain that we live in” (134).

As a work of metafiction, *The Long Song* challenges the idea of a singular meaning or truth and suggests that an historical or literary text can only offer a partial account of the past. By underlining the relationship between ideology and recorded history, the novel radically questions the knowability of the past. It draws particular attention to processes of textual production and foregrounds the procedures of framing in the genre of the slave narrative. By parodying or subverting the stylistic conventions of the slave narrative, alternative, repressed and marginalised histories come to the fore, undermining the authenticity of recorded and official histories. For instance, in her article on *The Long Song* entitled “A Written Song,” Maria Helena Lima notes that the novel encourages “a hermeneutic of suspicion”(142) by presenting, not only, contradictory accounts of events in the novel but also, competing historical accounts of life on a Caribbean sugar plantation and on Jamaican planter society. For example, the novel depicts the Christmas Rebellion from multiple points of view, including the conflicting perspectives of plantation slaves on the island, the British militia who quash the rebellion and the white plantation owners’ experiences of its aftermath. By inserting historical events into the fictional context of a novel, *The Long Song* also conveys the multiplicity of available interpretations of past events and questions the social, philosophical, legal and political discourses from which a work of historical fiction is constructed. Finally, the novel engages intertextually with other literary works, most notably, the slave narrative of Mary Prince entitled *A History of Mary Prince: a West Indian Slave Related by Herself* which was published in London in 1831. Levy cites Prince’s narrative in the bibliography for the novel and arguably, *The Long Song* rewrites and reveals occluded spaces in Prince’s text.

Since Levy's novel engages so rigorously with Mary Prince's life story, it is necessary to examine the context of Prince's life and the production of her slave narrative. Prince was born in Bermuda. While she was still a child, she was sold, along with her mother, to the Williams family where she acted as a playmate for the family's young daughter, Betsy. In *The History of Mary Prince*, Prince states that she was "too young to understand rightly [her] condition as a slave" (1) and that this was the happiest period of her life.⁷² After the death of Mrs Williams, Prince was sold to Captain Ingham and, later, to Mr. D_____ with whom she travelled as a slave to the Turk Islands. She worked in the salt ponds there for around ten years. The work was very physically demanding and, according to Prince's history, Mr D_____ was a very cruel and violent master. She returned to Bermuda with him and was eventually sold into the service of John Wood. Prince later travelled to Antigua with Wood and became part of the Moravian Church. In 1826, she married a freedman, Daniel James despite Wood's disapproval. Prince came to London in 1828 accompanied by Mr Wood and his wife. In England, her health steadily declined and she suffered from debilitating rheumatism. Due to illness and infirmity, Prince's capacity to work was severely diminished and the Woods threw her out. She subsequently sought the assistance of members of the London branch of the Moravian Church who put her in touch with the Anti-Slavery society in Aldermanbury. Prince was taken in by the Anti-Slavery Society Secretary, Thomas Pringle and worked in his home. She dictated her life story to Susanna Strickland, a Methodist and poet, who was a guest in the home of Pringle who edited the narrative.

Arguably, Mary Prince's published life history is mediated and framed by white space; also, in line with the conventions of the slave narrative genre, Prince's narrative is carefully designed to appeal to white readers. For instance, Prince's narrative is framed by a stanza from William Cowper's poem 'The Negro's Complaint' (1788), where the poet speaks on behalf of all slaves, asserting their humanity and arguing that black people should not be

judged “by the colour of our kind.” The text then includes a preface by Thomas Pringle. After Prince’s life history, it includes a supplement also written by Pringle. In addition, Pringle frequently interrupts and annotates Prince’s narrative to comment on her testimony and authenticate it with supporting evidence. In the “Supplement” and appendices to the narrative, the editor includes corroborative evidence from letters, newspaper articles, testimonials and cases reported in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* to add weight to Prince’s own account. Pringle’s supplementary and prefatory texts prepare and prime the white reader for the black interior narrative. The hierarchy of white and black space is also evident in the progression of the narrative voice in the text. Firstly, the reader encounters the white English poet’s appropriation of the collective slave voice in “The Negro’s Complaint,” and then the editor’s prefatory voice in his introduction to the transcribed and translated oral narration and, finally, the reader arrives at Prince’s mediated and edited oral history.

In terms of textual space, white, European literary conventions infringe upon the black space of the slave narrative and on the oral narration of the black slave. In his preface to *The History of Mary Prince*, Thomas Pringle vouches for the document’s authenticity; he states, “I went over the whole, carefully examining her on every fact and circumstance detailed” (1). Similarly, he notes that he amended Prince’s “peculiar phraseology” (1) and also excluded “redundancies and gross grammatical errors, so as to render it clearly intelligible” (1). Pringle’s paternalistic attitude is evident throughout the preface and supplementary material and he represents Prince within a hierarchy of human life where white, European, Christian values are normative. In her article “Pringle’s Pruning of Prince,” Jessica L. Allen suggests that Pringle’s editorship of “redundancies” in the text probably refers “to the repetition and syntax characteristic of the Creole that informed Prince’s speech and narrative habits” (510). The removal of this repetition from the narrative, for Allen, is evidence of “anxiety and control over representation: who had the power to repeat, to

emphasis, to speak freely” (510). Pringle appears to have felt obliged to ensure that Prince’s narrative was comprehensible to white readers. By editing and pruning Prince’s language, Pringle inadvertently alludes to the perceived inferiority of Creole as a means of expression in the eyes of whites. Significantly, however, Allen suggests that by mentioning the omission of repetitions in the preface, Pringle actually highlights “the prevalent use of repetition in her oral narration” (511), thus alluding to an original, unedited transcript which ultimately confers a degree of “authorial agency” (511) on Prince.

In the article “The History of Mary Prince and the Meaning of English History,” Kremena T. Todorova suggests that Pringle’s decision to entitle Prince’s life story “*The History of Mary Prince*” is significant as it indicates the “formal character of [her] narrative” (289). For Todorova, the fact that Prince’s narrative was “published under the authoritative title *History*” (295) gives it a “publicly recognised status” (289) which has been “verified and sanctioned by the Western apparatus for the production of knowledge” (289). Todorova argues that Prince’s narrative is threatening to concepts of Englishness because it, not only, condemns the institution of slavery but the text is “included in the empire’s history” (295) and, as an account of the existence of a colonial subject who “cannot be inscribed by the dominant discourse” (295), the ex-slave’s narrative points to a “refigured notion of English history and identity” (295). Arguably, this threat to the notion of Englishness accounts for the way the ex-slave’s voice is curtailed in the narrative and by the supplementary material attached to the text.

In the preface and supplementary material, Pringle was primarily concerned with stressing Prince’s reliability as a witness to the horror of slavery. It is important to note that while imperialism was a source of national pride for English people, the ethics of colonial slavery were coming to the fore in British politics around the time of the publication of Prince’s narrative in 1831. For abolitionists like Pringle, the primary objective of the framing

devices in the slave narrative was to assert and emphasise the humanity of the slave. The various framing procedures also serve to authenticate the narrative as a piece of anti-slavery propaganda. However, after the narrative was published, debates about its accuracy and Prince's reliability ensued. The pro-slavery lobbyist and editor of the *Glasgow Courier*, James McQueen and the anti-abolitionist Anglican missionary, Reverend James Curtin both challenged its veracity. Mary Prince's moral character was called into question and formed the basis of McQueen's and John Wood's challenge to the narrative's accuracy. These documents which challenged and denigrated Prince's account were included in the appendices to the revised *The History of Mary Prince* (2009), which was edited by Moira Ferguson and originally published in 1987. In the testimony contained in the appendices, Wood accused Prince of stealing and of being "licentious, and even depraved in her conduct, and unfaithful to her husband" (39). Similarly, Wood had accused her of criminality "as police records will shew" (35), which was strenuously decided by her abolitionist supporters. Two court cases ensued. In the first case, Thomas Pringle sued Thomas Cadell, the publisher of *Blackwood's Magazine* which published McQueen attack on Prince's narrative. Prince was required to testify before Lord Chief Justice Tindal on February 21st, 1833. In the second case, five days later, Prince's former owner, John Wood sued Thomas Pringle for libel, and won, as Pringle could not provide any witnesses from the West Indies to testify that Prince had been ill-treated by Wood. The court case at King's Bench, Guildhall in London marked the last known appearance of Mary Prince.⁷³

Significantly, *The Long Song* has a similar structure to *The History of Mary Prince* with a preface and an afterword framing the slave's narrative. The novel questions the power dynamic in the relationship between the editor and the narrator in the slave narrative genre by highlighting the framing procedures in the text. For example, it contains a brief passage on the inside sleeve of the book jacket, prior to Thomas Kinsman's preface, written by July. This

section of the text does not have a page number and is distinctly separate from July's written narrative. Written in a first-person, direct address to the reader, the passage stresses the importance of July's speaking power. For instance, she opens by stating "You do not know me yet but I am the narrator of this work," (unpaginated) and also describes herself as "your storyteller" (unpaginated). Arguably, this prefatory passage adopts the characteristics of speech and quite possibly reflects the oral heritage of the slave. This section of the novel exemplifies what Gates describes in *The Signifying Monkey* (1988) as a "speakerly text" (181) or a text "whose rhetorical strategy is designed to represent an oral literary tradition" (181) and emphasise the importance of the black speaking voice. More specifically, the presence of this passage in *The Long Song* reflects the importance of orality and oral testimony as a specific political practice deployed by slaves to pass on experiences, memories and histories.

In *Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality in Women's Narratives of Slavery* (2006), DoVeanna S. Fulton emphasises the importance of oral strategies in the lives of illiterate slave women who, in many cases, were denied a "publicly sanctioned space" (1) to relate their experiences and were also prohibited from participating in official "legal or public discourses" (21). For Fulton, orality and oral strategies in a written narrative allows the reader to "simultaneously read and hear the sounds of Blackness" (7). The novel arguably privileges the black speaking voice and oral language by including this prefatory passage at the beginning. This reference to the oral tradition of the slave is, of course, also reflected in the title of the novel, *The Long Song*, which is a reminder of the role of song in the everyday lives of plantation slaves; it was common for slaves to sing during their labour in the fields and these songs often lamented the brutality of slave existence.⁷⁴ Also, slave songs contained hidden meanings and were often used by slaves as a means of coded communication which could not be understood by the slave owners.

By including a Creole phrase in July's prefatory passage, *The Long Song* also renegotiates the textual space and language hierarchy of the genre of slave narrative where editors, like Pringle, excised Creole. Not only does the black textual space precede the white space in *The Long Song*, but, also, the allusion to oral speech and the use of Creole vocabularies can be interpreted as an example of what Mikhail Bakhtin describes in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) as "dialogized heteroglossia" (273). According to Bakhtin, heteroglossia refers to the various languages which make up social life and literature which are constantly engaged in a struggle with one another. The novel, for Bakhtin, is a "diversity of social speech types (sometimes even a diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organised" (262). Describing the "rich and tension-filled verbal-ideological history" (295) of the novel, he argues that literature is constructed of various perspectives, intentions and accents which are constantly competing with each other and convey "particular points of view on the world" (293). These "dialogic relations" (293) are evident in the language of *The Long Song*. The reference to the oral tradition of slaves and the use of Creole in the novel conveys the hierarchy of language and speech types in the slave narrative genre and in colonial society. However, the novel also is an example of heteroglossia which as Bakhtin contends, is "aimed sharply and polemically" (273) against "official languages" (273) and reified language and speech types of any given time. Incorporating Creole and oral speech into this prefatory passage is a way of prioritising the slave's voice and, also, of challenging the dominance of Standard English written narration. As Aljoe argues in "Caribbean Slave Narratives," the use of Creole in these texts points to an "inherent multiplicity" (5) of voices and the presence of Creole conveys tension in the narratives which "subverts the consolidating and unifying power of formal English by affirming linguistic diversity" (5).

The allusion to the oral tradition of the slave in both the title of *The Long Song* and prefatory passage is linked with July's written narration. For example, in the prefatory passage, July switches from first person direct address to the reader to a third person description of her upcoming narrative. The narrator also draws attention to the convention of the framing device which precedes her written narrative, suggesting that a preface is supposed to shape the reader's perception and entice potential readership by giving them "a little taste of the story that is held within these pages" (unpaginated). July also comments that the editor suggests that she should present her story as a "thrilling journey" through slavery and abolition in "the company of people who lived it" (unpaginated). This is possibly a reminder that slave narratives, such as Mary Prince's narrative, were published, in part, as a source of entertainment for white people living in Britain who were interested in life in the colonies, as well as an insight into the institution of slavery.⁷⁵ July also states she has been prompted to write an introduction to the text by her son "so the reader can decide if this is a novel they might care to consider" (unpaginated). Unlike the abolitionist agenda or conversion themes of slave narratives such as *The History of Mary Prince*, July does not openly align herself to a political or religious agenda in this prefatory passage and she states, as if to address the editor and publisher, "come, let them just read it for themselves" (unpaginated). By connecting the oral and written narratives, July claims ownership of the text. By dismissing textual devices such as the preface and the role of her son as editor, she privileges her own written narration and she asserts her narrative authority using Creole: "Cha, I tell my son, what fuss-fuss" (unpaginated). Here and elsewhere, July incorporates Creole phraseology which, on the one hand, infringes upon the literary conventions of the preface of the standard slave narrative preface and, on the other, emphasises the authority of the narrator. By manipulating the framing device, July asserts control over the narrative and renegotiates the textual space of the novel. Consequently, the power differential between the

editor and the narrator is altered. Ultimately, then, this prefatory passage becomes a vehicle for self-creation and self-assertion for July.

The Long Song also addresses the editorial pruning of Prince's text and questions the role of the slave narrative genre as a reliable representation of slave life. Like Prince's narrative, it contains a preface and postscript by the editor, Thomas Kinsman. Like Thomas Pringle's preface in Prince's text, Kinsman's preface in *The Long Song* is written in Standard English reflecting his English education and imbuing him with editorial authority. By contrast, July's creole style of narration arguably typifies and pays homage to the oral narration of West Indian slaves like Mary Prince.⁷⁶ However, in an attempt to redress the perceived dominance of the white editor in the slave narrative, the novel effectively reframes the editor's framing device. Kinsman states that initially July wanted to dictate her story to him but he decided that she should write it. He notes that July was concerned at the prospect of writing her narrative because "she began her life as a person from whom writing the letters ABC could have seen her put to the lash" (2). Historically, slave owners often prohibited slaves from acquiring literacy as they feared that education could incite rebellion.⁷⁷ Here *The Long Song* draws attention to the way slaves were silenced by their white owners and prevented from providing written testimony of their experiences. Furthermore, as the editor's mother, July is effectively telling her son's story too and by mapping out his early life at the Amity Plantation, July's narrative project involves reclaiming two black lives: her own and that of her son.

In his preface, Thomas Kinsman emphasises the importance of his mother's account of her experiences and asserts that his role as editor was "to make her tale flow like some of the finest writing in the English language" (3). Emphasising the conditions of textual production, he describes his role as editor and publisher in positive terms, commenting that "there was no shame to be felt from [his] assistance" (3) and that some of the biggest

publishing houses in Britain “aided and abetted” (3) authors in this way. However, unlike Pringle’s authenticating preface in Prince’s narrative, in *The Long Song*, the fictional editor, Kinsman, does not attest to the truth of the narrative in his preface. In fact, he stresses his lack of control over the direction and scope of July’s text. Initially, she had planned to write only a pamphlet but the manuscript grew in size over time. Unlike Prince’s text, which was paired down by Pringle, July’s narrative is expansive and dominates the textual space. Kinsman states that July “became quite puffed up, emboldened to the point where my advice often fell onto ears that remained deaf to it” (3). Kinsman’s preface stresses that July wrote her narrative without outside intervention. He describes the dynamic between his mother and himself as that of the “brightest pupil and outworn master” (3). By contrast with Mary Prince’s narrative, July’s creolised speech is not edited from the manuscript. July is, in effect, reclaiming the textual space in the novel and asserting her authority by contravening the instructions of her editor.

In addition, July describes her story as “more thrilling than anything the rascal spider Anancy could conjure” (10). The Anancy or Anansi spider is an important part of West African and Caribbean folklore. Levy is pointing to the African and Caribbean oral cultural traditions which underpin her narrative. The reference to the Anancy spider also underlines the ambivalence of July’s narration. For instance, in her article, “I am the Narrator of this Work: Narrative Authority in Andrea Levy’s *The Long Song*,” Fiona Tolan notes that the Anancy spider is traditionally a trickster or prankster figure in African oral cultural which travelled from Africa to the Caribbean as part of the slave trade.⁷⁸ By appropriating the role of the Anancy storyteller for herself, Tolan suggests that July becomes “a female trickster-narrator, wily and disruptive” (96), subverting and radicalising the narrative form.⁷⁹

July’s authorial control over the textual space is also demonstrated when she satirises her son’s editorial interruptions and corrections. Within the main body of the novel, for

instance, she interrupts the narrative on a number of occasions to discuss domestic strife in the Kinsman household. When Kinsman's wife Lillian and her daughters quarrel about the latest hairstyle fashion, July tells the reader that her son had to intervene and "had rough words with Lillian and his pickney about the carry-on" (142). This noisy and comical quarrel interrupted both July's writing and Kinsman's work as editor of the text. The flow of the narrative is temporarily suspended by this temporal shift to the business of everyday family life. In this way, the intrusion of the narrator draws attention to the conditions of the production of the narrative. Also, by presenting Kinsman as a harangued husband and father, the novel emphasises his humanity, emotionality and fallibility rather than depicting him as an austere, disembodied and authoritative figure like the editors of historical slave narratives.

Moreover, July's narration is predominantly in the third-person but she occasionally switches to the first-person when she addresses the reader. By alternating between first-hand recollections and third-person narration, the novel destabilises the conventions of the slave narrative and disrupts the temporal and linear structure of the story. For the first half of the novel, July does not disclose that the narrative is autobiographical. It is only when Thomas Kinsman berates her for omitting the details of his birth, stating "this is the story of your own life and not of your creating" (142) that July admits that the tale she is recounting is her life story. Importantly, July has misled the reader as to the autobiographical nature of her story and her position as narrator is purposely ambivalent. July's failure to disclose that the narrative is an account of her own life demonstrates her authorial control, suggesting that she has the power to reveal or conceal certain aspects of her life. As William Andrews argues, slave narratives had a uniform structure and slaves could not express autonomous opinions or desires because it might have alienated their white readership. July's ambivalent narrative position provides a stark contrast with the slave narratives like Mary Prince's life history which place so much emphasis on the narrator's reliability and credibility as an eyewitness to

the horrors of slavery. Unlike the historical slave narrative genre, *The Long Song* does not construct the slave as a Christianised, morally-upright individual. Instead, it evokes July's humanity by presenting her fallibility, stubbornness, sense of humour and various idiosyncrasies. By emphasising the unreliability of the narrator, the novel disorients the reader. It points out that even recorded or official histories are subjective, alluding to the role of language in shaping our concept of reality. By emphasising the way meanings are constructed, the novel demonstrates that reality is 'accessed' through various reading or interpretative processes which are ideologically imbued and that any representation of the past cannot offer a definitive or objective interpretation of events.

By constructing the life story of a female slave and by emphasising what has been excised from official accounts of slavery, *The Long Song* challenges what McKittrick describes in *Demonic Grounds* as the "geographic project (of western cultural dominance) that thrives on forgetting and displacing blackness" (33). In the novel, July develops an interior narrative which becomes a site of resistance. For instance, July has two personae. When Caroline Mortimer brings July to Amity initially, she changes her name to Marguerite. In his seminal text *Slavery and Social Death* (1982), Orlando Patterson argues that changing a name is a "symbolic act of stripping a person of his former identity" (55). Interestingly, in her book, *The Intimate Empire* (2000), Gillian Whitlock notes that Mary Prince's name is also changed several times while she is a slave. She is called Mary, Princess of Wales or Molly Wood by her owners in Antigua and Bermuda; on other occasions, she is called by her married name, Mary James and in the supplements, she is Mary Prince. According to Whitlock, the changes of name indicates that "the trading of [Prince's] body through slavery continues to deprive her of any stable history and identity, for each of these titles refers to a different construction of her place, character and status" (19). In *The Long Song*, however, July refuses to accept the name Caroline ascribes to her. She strives for an identity which is

autonomous from slavery; she retains a strong sense of her family and life pre-slavery, stating that “it was only Caroline Mortimer who did look upon July’s face to see a Marguerite residing there” (43). In the novel, July’s interior narrative or consciousness becomes a site of resistance which cannot be fully colonised or enslaved. This is a literary strategy which, on the one hand, questions the politics of representation in the slave narrative genre and, on the other hand, alludes to the psychic space or interiority of the slave that cannot be controlled by whites. The interior narrative functions as an alternative space or an imaginative remapping of the slave’s self.

Both *The Long Song* and *The History of Mary Prince* chart alternative geographies through the concept of interiority, both mental and textual. Prince’s narrative allows her to redefine herself in an alternative space. In an article on Mary Prince entitled “The Heartbeat of a West Indian Slave: The History of Mary Prince,” Sandra Pouchet Paquet argues that, through the publication of her narrative, Prince becomes an “active agent of her society’s transformation” (132). Paquet also emphasises the contradiction between Prince’s “physical enslavement and interior growth” (139). This interiority is described by Paquet as the “springboard to an empowering resistance that represents the entire community” (143). Paquet contrasts the exterior focus on slavery in Prince’s narrative—the use of the narrative as an anti-slavery piece of propaganda—with her personal and interior narrative, which consists of direct critical commentaries and personal opinions on her own experiences as a slave.

Paquet claims that Prince’s interior narrative constitutes a public narrative, addressing itself towards an audience and offering a critique of slavery and of white people which is separate from the abolitionist agenda. For instance, Prince criticises white people who uphold the institution of slavery and is critical of the treatment of slaves by their owners, stating that “slavery hardens white people’s hearts towards the blacks” (5). She also asserts

the humanity of slaves which is denied by whites, arguing that “the Buckra people who keep slaves think that black people are like cattle, without natural affection. But my heart tells me it is far otherwise” (11) As Paquet notes, Prince interrupts her narrative with “emotive and evocative apostrophes, philosophical reflections and moral lessons” (137) designed to raise awareness about the condition of slavery and she is openly critical of colonial slavery and its white perpetrators, drawing on her own experience. She positions herself as equal to white people and asserts the humanity of black people:

Since I have been here [in Britain] I have often wondered how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner. But when they go to the West Indies, they forget God and all feelings of shame, I think, since they can see and do such things. They tie up slaves like hogs—moor them like cattle, and they lick them, so as hogs, or cattle, or horses, never were flogged—and yet they come home and say, and make some good people believe, that slaves don’t want to get out of slavery. But they put a cloak about the truth. (29)

Prince questions the Christian morality of the colonials and accuses them of falsifying and concealing the realities of slavery, suggesting that they “put a cloak about the truth.” By criticising white slave owners in this way, she asserts her subjectivity, offering her own experience of slavery as a counterargument. Significantly, the cloak image is utilised in other slave narratives, such as those from Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs and Olaudah Equiano, to denote a moment of stress or trauma in the narrative and alludes to events that are unspeakable or spaces that are closed off in the text.⁸⁰

While Prince’s narrative is carefully mediated by Pringle’s preface and the various supporting documents, it is important to note that Prince is socially produced by the text within the context of nineteenth-century morality and femininity. In other words, the project of humanising Prince, undertaken by Pringle, required her to conform to nineteenth century,

European norms of gender and Christian piety. As argued earlier, the moulding of Prince's persona occurs in the textual space prior to her narration so that the black textual space is minimised and curtailed by whites. For instance, as Gillian Whitlock notes in *The Intimate Empire* (2000), Prince is positioned against the amanuensis, Susanna Strickland and their opposition "seems to anchor the writing scene" (17). For Whitlock, Strickland is the "white English woman who is able to embody the precepts of femininity, domestic respectability and innocent womanhood, an Englishness that casts Prince as *the other woman*" (Whitlock's emphasis) (17). Prince, then, is instantly placed in a hierarchy of femininity where she is compared to Strickland and found wanting. In addition, the editor attempts to excise any discussion of sexual abuse or indeed sexual relationships from Prince's oral narration in order to protect the sensibilities of white women readers. Nevertheless, some allusions to sexual relationships and sexual abuse remain in the narrative. As critics including Moira Ferguson and Sarah Paquet have argued, Prince challenges the precepts and white norms of femininity embodied by Strickland, offering an insight into the specifically female experience of slavery.

Significantly, *The Long Song* also expands upon the references to sexual abuse of slave women in *The History of Mary Prince*. In the introduction to the revised second edition of *The History of Mary Prince* (2000), Moira Ferguson alludes to these "camouflaged references" (24) to sexual abuse in Prince's narrative. For instance, Prince claims that her owner Mr D.____ "had an ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked, and ordering me to wash him in a tub of water" (17). She observes that this "was worse to me than all the licks" (17) and that her "eyes were full of shame" (17) as a result of this experience. Possibly alluding to the sexual nature of this abuse, Prince describes her owner as an "indecent man" (17) with no "shame for his own flesh" (17) and runs away to a neighbouring house in distress. In order to escape from Mr D.____, Prince eventually asks to be sold to John Wood.

However, she could not directly refer to the abuse or to her sexual relationships with white men so as not to offend white female readers.

Discussing the veiled references to sexual abuse in Prince's history in her book *Ghosts of Slavery: a Literary Archaeology of Black Women's Lives* (2002), Jenny Sharpe argues that the issue of sexual abuse is censored in the narrative, possibly by the editor, and comments on what can be described as the relationship between sexual abuse, the disciplinary function of the literary text and control of the female slave body. She discusses the narrative's exclusion of Prince's attempt to gain a modicum of freedom through sexual relationships with men such as Captain Abbot. Abbot gave Prince money to buy her freedom and Prince herself had also arranged for Adam White, a free black cooper, and Thomas Burchell, a white cooper, to employ her, in order to escape from John Wood. However, Wood refused to manumit her. Sharpe speculates that Pringle possibly censored Prince's account and excluded the details of her relationship with Abbot because it was likely that any suggestion of extra-marital sexual relationships would have undermined her credibility.⁸¹ Sharpe argues that the "conditions of [Prince's] sexual relations were closer to prostitution, which made her actions all the more damning in the eyes of British abolitionists" (123).

Moreover, in the appendices to the *History*, Joseph Phillips, an abolitionist living in Antigua, confirms that Prince was involved with Abbot but the "immoral conduct" (44) ended "when she became seriously impressed with religion" (44). The text adopts the form of a conversion narrative, implying that through her conversion to Christianity, Prince sought forgiveness for her former "sins" which were attributed to her pre-Christianised ignorance. According to Sharpe, the reason that Prince's testimony does not contain references to these relationships is because Pringle was required to portray Prince as a Christian who, although she had little or no autonomy as a slave, was expected to somehow exercise control over her body. Prince's conduct must be presented as morally upright in order to function as

propaganda for the anti-slavery cause and acts of perceived sexual misconduct could not be part of the narrative. Again, the representation of Prince was connected to the white audience's perception of her, particularly the white female audience. In the nineteenth century, white women were generally not exposed to material with references to sexuality or sexual activity. In Sharpe's view, Prince's "narrative authority was linked to her sexuality" (121) and the occlusion of this material can be interpreted as a "testimony of the power relations between master and slave in the West Indies, on the one hand, and the West Indian slave woman and abolitionists in England on the other" (151). The silences and omissions in the narrative reflect precisely how relations of power functioned between Prince, who exercised a limited degree of narrative control and the editor, Pringle. Narrative control is linked to the regulation of female sexuality in the text which is constructed in terms of the norms and values of white abolitionist discourse. Pringle attempts to exclude the sexual violence suffered by Prince in order to comply with the abolitionist agenda, simultaneously dominating Prince and the textual space. The issue of Prince's sexual conduct becomes central to authenticating the narrative and overshadows the issue of Prince's freedom.

Furthermore, the novel problematises the concept of an authentic account of slavery; certain traumas—such as the trauma of sexual violence—cannot be revealed. *The Long Song* examines the sexual relationships between female slaves and white men, emphasising the elisions in the historical slave narrative which convey the absent black spaces which are ultimately unavailable to the reader. Mirroring the historical narratives of Mary Prince and Harriet Jacob, July perceives her relationship with the plantation owner Robert Goodwin as a survival strategy and attempts to encourage his advances, knowing it would mean a somewhat easier life in the plantation house. However, Robert is keen to win the approval of his father, a Baptist minister, and is initially concerned with upholding his father's Christian values. He is conflicted about his attraction to July stating: "my father sent me here to do

good. He is a righteous man” (205). He is encouraged by a letter he receives from his father telling him to marry because “a married man might do as he pleases” (217). This gives Robert the impetus to marry Caroline and keep July as his mistress, since his father has advised that society generally turns “a blind eye upon a married man” (218). Tellingly, in an interior monologue, Robert alludes to the flawed moral reasoning of his father commenting that “he had known his father to [keep mistresses] many times” (218). Noting also the prevalence of sexual relationships between white men and female slaves on the island, he is encouraged by what he describes as “such blindness upon this Caribbean island” (218).

In *Ghosts of Slavery*, Sharpe argues that, on Caribbean plantations, sexual relationships between with white men and slave women were often contingent on the slave’s performance of “the domestic function of the absent wife” (xxii). Concubinage was relatively commonplace in the Caribbean and slave women served as “secondary wives of white men and mothers of their mixed-race children” (xxii). In the novel, for instance, Caroline’s brother, John Howarth lives with his Creole ‘wife’ Agnes until his death. When July realises the new plantation owner, Robert Goodwin is sexually attracted to her, she quickly devises a plan to seduce him. She describes Robert as a “prize” (205) and imagines that, if she forms a relationship with him, she would be elevated socially and could potentially become part of the plantocracy:

July was overjoyed... Miss July Goodwin is coming to take tea. The swelling of his private part began pressing hard upon July, and she knew that what she must do now was lead this tender young white man around by it. (204)

The novel’s depiction of July’s dogged attempt to seduce the fervently religious and chaste Robert Goodwin playfully reverses the power dynamic between the slave and planter. When commenting on Robert’s moral objection to a sexual relationship with her, July addresses the reader stating: “this is not the way white men usually behaved on this Caribbean island”

(207) alluding, perhaps, to the prevalence of concubinage on the island and, also, to the sexual violence against slave women.⁸² However, it is important to note that July perceived her autonomy in terms of an idealised view of white female domesticity. She imagines becoming “Miss July Goodwin” and attaining the social status associated with white marriage. Through July, the novel also demonstrates the ways in which nineteenth century concepts of womanhood are tied to white models of marriage and domesticity. Rather than suggesting an alternative black female identity, the novel demonstrates that concepts of womanhood are modelled on white identity norms.

Moreover, the children born as a result of the sexual abuse of slaves and from the practice of concubinage also contributed to the creation of a class and racial hierarchy which privileged light skin. As I mentioned earlier, Levy has written about how this legacy of internalised racism affected generations of Jamaicans. The idealisation of light skin is referred to in *The Long Song* when July becomes acquainted with Clara, a slave at a neighbouring plantation. She is described as a ‘quadroon’ since her “mama was a handsome mulatto housekeeper to her papa, a naval man from Scotch Land” (69). July was completely in awe of Clara and noted that despite the fact that she was a slave, in certain lights, “she did appear whiter than her missus” (69). Referring to the social mobility achieved by slaves and former slaves with lighter skin, July notes that Clara eventually manipulated her owner Elizabeth Wyndham into manumitting her, by refusing to do any physical labour, arguing that she was ‘quadroon’ and the work was beneath her. Her owner preferred the compensation paid by the government rather than dealing with an uncooperative servant. When she received her freedom, Clara intensified her mission to “forward only to white skin” (187). For instance, she also hosted various social gatherings for white men where she introduced them to meticulously-chosen light-skinned women. July sums up Clara’s philosophy on her progression to white skin:

Only with a white man, can there be a guarantee that the colour of your pickney will be raised. For a mulatto who breeds with a white man will bring forth a quadroon; and the quadroon that enjoys white relations will give to this world a mustee; the mustee will beget a mustiphino; and the mustiphino...oh, the mustiphino's child with a white man for a papa, will find each day greets them no longer with a frown but welcomes them with a smile, as they at last stride within this world as a cherished white person. (187)

July herself was determined to attend one of Clara's dances and told her that her father was the white overseer on Amity. Clara refused to allow July to attend these gatherings, arguing that her hair was not straight enough. She also informs July that she is cohabiting with an elderly white attorney William Walker from Friendship Plantation whom she describes as her husband. However, there had been no marriage ceremony and the attorney had "a wife and five children in England" (191). As the novel suggests, the practice of concubinage operated as a form social mobility based on the disavowal of black skin, linking whiteness with freedom and a normative concept of the human, a point I will return to later on.

Furthermore, critics such as Jenny Sharpe and Hazel Carby have noted that romantic love, domesticity and marriage were also idealised in white culture in the nineteenth century, specifically in white women's fiction.⁸³ In addition, according to Sharpe, white female abolitionists "established the humanity of female slaves through the domestic virtues they shared with white middle-class women" (85) and encouraged white women to empathise with slave women who were "sexuality violated and whose children were removed from them" (85). Female slaves were portrayed as victims of slavery who were denied the opportunity to achieve those ideals of domesticity and marriage. However, Sharpe argues that this discourse was problematic as it failed to take account of the "domesticity white men established with their concubines in the colonies" (85). Of course, white marriage and norms of domesticity

were not available to the black female slave and, so, the concept of domesticity within which the black female slave is framed by white abolitionists, was tantamount to the effacement of the experiences of female slaves. In order to highlight this erasure of black female experience in the slave narrative genre, *The Long Song* juxtaposes the exploitation of female slaves and ex-slaves with the domestic sphere of the white home and white, European marital conventions. Like Mary Prince's relationship with Captain Abbot, July's relationship with Robert should be recognised as a relatively limited act of subterfuge conducted against the overwhelming power and dominance of the white planter class. Sharpe alludes to the "paradoxical position of the slave woman as one who existed outside of the structures of domesticity" (121), yet was expected to uphold the ideals of purity associated with it, despite not having control over her body. While veiled references to sexual relationships by female slaves like Prince undermine the conventions of abolitionist discourses, they should not be read, according to Sharpe, as a sign of the slaves' "narrative control" (151). The brief allusions to Prince's sexual activity conveys the gaps and elisions in the text, underscoring what is absent from her account of life as a slave.⁸⁴

By engaging intertextually with Prince's narrative, *The Long Song* both exposes and challenges the hierarchy of textual space in the slave narrative genre. Overall, however, while the novel discloses spaces of resistance and sites of empowerment, the inclusion of the sexual relationship between Robert and July reinforces the image of the female slave as an object of exchange.⁸⁵ Following Orlando Patterson, Saidiya Hartman argues, in *Scenes of Subjection* (1997), that those female slaves who used their sexuality to obtain a modicum of freedom actually "reveal the indebtedness of freedom to notions of property, possession and exchange" (112). For Hartman, the sexual relationship between the slave and white master reinforces the slave's "status as property" (112) and structures the slave's self as "alienable and exchangeable, and notably sexuality is at the heart of this exchange" (112). While the

planter dominated the female slave's body, he also controlled the measure of freedom that the female slave could attain. Fundamentally, *The Long Song* underlines the precariousness of the female slave's position on the plantation. Like Prince, July was at the mercy of the planter. Robert Goodwin's affections shifted desultorily from July to his wife Caroline, reinforcing the vulnerability of female slaves on the plantation. This is a reminder that July, like Prince, did not control the conditions under which she entered into a relationship with a white man.⁸⁶

The relationship between Robert and July is further complicated by an intertextual reference to *Jane Eyre*, according to Fiona Tolan in her essay "I am the Author of this Work: Narrative Authority in Andrea Levy's *The Long Song*." She argues that Levy's novel "knowingly intervenes in the fraught critical history" (103) of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's *Wild Sargasso Sea* (1966). In her article, Tolan argues that *The Long Song* has many parallels with the story of Rochester and Antoinette Mason in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wild Sargasso Sea*. For instance, *Wild Sargasso Sea* and *The Long Song* are set around the time of the Emancipation Act. Tolan describes Robert Goodwin as a Rochester-like figure who—like both Brontë's and Rhys's Rochester—travels to the West Indies and makes his fortune there. As Tolan notes, after marrying Caroline, Robert secretly houses July in the basement and "like Bertha/Antoinette before her, [she] is pushed to the periphery of the domestic space, haunting its edges and troubling the security of the sanctioned family narrative" (105). However, Tolan argues that by emphasising the autonomy and complexity of the black female self in her portrayal of July, Levy's novel challenges the depiction of the subaltern female in *Jane Eyre*.

Jane Eyre describes the eponymous female protagonist's journey to autonomy. An orphaned girl, Jane is employed as a governess at Thornfield Hall, a three-storey country estate. There, she meets and falls in love with her employer, Edward Fairfax Rochester. During her time at Thornfield, Jane often hears strange laughter and other noises coming

from the third floor but these disturbances are attributed to a servant, Grace Poole. At a party held at Thornfield, Jane is introduced to Richard Mason and he informs her that Rochester had once lived in Spanish Town in Jamaica. After a time, Jane and Rochester admit their mutual feelings of love and become engaged. However, on the day of their wedding, Jane learns that Rochester is already married to Bertha Antoinetta Mason, a Creole woman from Jamaica and that Grace Poole has helped conceal Rochester's seemingly mentally-ill wife on the third floor. Rochester claims that he married Bertha for money and not for love. Refusing to become his mistress, Jane flees Thornfield. Soon afterwards, she becomes acquainted with her relatives, the Rivers and inherits twenty thousand pounds from her uncle, John Eyre which she then divides evenly with her newly-found cousins. One night, she has a dream that she hears Rochester's voice and decides to return to Thornfield. On her arrival, she discovers the house in ruins and learns that Bertha had burned it to the ground, killing herself in the process. Rochester has lost a hand and the vision in his eye trying to save his wife and the servants. Jane is reunited with him at Ferndean where he had been living as a recluse. They marry and have a son.

While Bertha Mason is a liminal figure in *Jane Eyre*, in "I am the Author of this Work," Tolan notes this character has generated much critical attention in the last forty years, especially from feminist and postcolonial critics. However, she also suggests that some critical responses to *Jane Eyre* have reinforced Brontë's portrayal of Bertha as an "inarticulately raging Creole" (103) and argues that, in particular, many second-wave feminists perceived Rochester's first wife as an expression of Jane's repressed anger, desire for autonomy and resistance to patriarchy. The most notable example of this is Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's influential text *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) where Bertha is described as "Jane's truest and darkest double...the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress" (360). Tolan also cites Spivak's essay "Three Women's Texts" which critiques

the portrayal of Antoinette/Bertha in *Jane Eyre*. Spivak argues that earlier feminist criticism of the novel ignored the oppression of subaltern women and the role of imperialism in the constitution of the subject. In her view, the Antoinette/Bertha character in *Jane Eyre* kills herself and burns down Thornfield so that Jane can become “the feminist individualist heroine of British fiction” (251). Moreover, Spivak describes Jane’s journey towards autonomy and self-realisation at the expense of Bertha as “an allegory of the general epistemic violence of imperialism, the construction of a self-immolating colonial subject for the glorification of the social mission of the coloniser” (251).

As a Jamaican creole, Bertha would have been a member of the white planter class. In *Allegories of Empire: the Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (1993), Jenny Sharpe explains that as the Abolitionist movement gained support in Britain, the West Indian planter class were castigated as cruel and immoral. The portrayal of Bertha in *Jane Eyre* represents the “idle plantocracy in the state of decline” (46). Bertha is associated with material corruption and with primitiveness. As Sharpe argues, racial purity in the novel is not necessarily associated with skin colour but with English national culture. Jane and Rochester represent the superiority and civility of Englishness in contrast to Bertha, the corrupt West Indian.⁸⁷ In addition, Sharpe also points out that there was a long history of racial-mixing in Jamaica and that “the scandal the creole presented to the British was the possibility of a white person who was not racially pure” (46). The stereotyping of Bertha as violent and mad is part of a process of disassociating the “pure English race from its corrupt West Indian line” (46).

As Sharpe notes, *Jane Eyre* has been described as a feminist novel because it depicts the “development of female consciousness” (30) through Jane’s journey from orphan to Rochester’s wife. However, she also argues that the references to subaltern women such as Bertha form “the shadow text to the constitution of the English sexed subject” (29). The

assertion of a female self in *Jane Eyre* is “a privileged mode of address for the feminist individualist” (32) which is not available to subaltern figures like Bertha.⁸⁸ The “other” women in the novel such as Bertha and Blanche Ingram do not have the same relationship to “voice-agency as the feminist individual” (35) and their subjectivities are silenced within the narrative. Sharpe argues that, throughout the novel, Jane’s attempts to overcome nineteenth-century class and gender restrictions are articulated by deploying “colonial tropes of bondage and liberation” (8). For example, she refers to the figure of the rebel slave to articulate forms of rebellion against those who mistreat her in the novel. These analogies are, in Sharpe’s view, most likely informed by the “historical memory of recent events in the West Indies” (40) at that time. Jane also refers to the plight of the sati widow and, for Sharpe, these expressions of sympathy “belong to a colonial discourse of social reform that establishes the racial superiority of the European by constructing the native woman as an object to be saved” (30).

Ultimately, Jane becomes the embodiment of the moral character of the English nation. During the course of the novel, she assumes the position of a missionary, imbued with moral superiority and intent on speaking for those who are enslaved. As a result, references to slavery and the practice of sati are re-appropriated and re-imagined to symbolise Jane’s personal and social development. As a white woman, Jane has the power and authority to reconfigure these colonial scenes and divest them of their meaning. Furthermore, Jane has the potential to relocate, to travel to the colonies and remap those spaces. Notably, in her article “Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy in *Jane Eyre*,” Susan L Meyer suggests that the death of Bertha at the end of *Jane Eyre* functions to disconnect Rochester from his sullied and immoral colonial past and her “sacrifice” (266) by fire creates a “purified, more egalitarian world” (266) where Jane and Rochester marry as economic and social equals. However, this redistribution of wealth improves the lot of middle class individuals like Jane

“closing out the working class and those from whom the figure of ‘slavery’ has been appropriated in the first place” (265).

Significantly, in “Three Women’s Texts,” Spivak claims that by giving Bertha Mason a narrative voice in *Wild Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys ensures that “the woman from the colonies is not sacrificed as an insane animal for her sister’s consolidation” (251). *Wild Sargasso Sea* attempts to reclaim the narrative of Bertha Mason and counteract the stereotype presented in Brontë’s novel.⁸⁹ Written as a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, the novel describes Antoinette’s early life in Spanish Town and her marriage to Rochester. Set in early nineteenth-century Jamaica, Antoinette, her younger brother, Pierre and her widowed mother, Annette live on Coulibri estate. Antoinette’s father, Mr Cosway was a former slave owner and he died of alcoholism after losing his wealth as a result of the Emancipation Act of 1833, which freed black slaves. Like *The Long Song*, *Wild Sargasso Sea* depicts the tension between the white aristocracy in Jamaica and their black servants. Annette eventually remarries an Englishman, Mr Mason. However, an attack on the restored Coulibri estate by freed blacks—who accidentally set the house on fire and fatally injure Pierre—drives her insane. Mr Mason sends her to an isolated house where she is cared for by a black couple. Antoinette is then enrolled in a convent school. When she is seventeen, Mr Mason and his son, Richard conspire to marry her off. Richard pays an Englishman—who remains nameless in the text—thirty thousand pounds to marry his stepdaughter. After the wedding, the newlyweds travel to Granbois, Antoinette’s inherited estate; however, her husband feels uncomfortable in these unfamiliar surroundings and soon begins to suspect that his new wife is mad like her mother. The Rochester figure also dislikes Christophine, an influential servant in the house who is rumoured to practice obeah and who acts as a surrogate mother to Antoinette. Worried about the increasing tension between herself and her husband, Antoinette asks Christophine for an obeah love potion. She then drugs and seduces her husband. On waking, he realises he has been drugged and sleeps

with a female servant in revenge. Shortly after this, Antoinette seems to go mad. Rochester decides to have her declared insane and they return to England. In the final part of the novel, Antoinette is imprisoned in Thornfield Hall under the supervision of Grace Poole and seems to have lost all sense of time and place. The novel ends with Antoinette escaping her room, intent on burning Thornfield to the ground.

For Tolan, Rhys re-imagines Bertha and Rochester's relationship and "constructs an oppositional counter-discourse to attenuate Brontë's implicit canonical and imperialist authority" (103); however, she fails to "rewrite the predetermined script that would forfeit the colonial other to affirm the colonising self" (104). Significantly, Tolan suggests that Levy's novel extends Rhys's project of "disrupting the embedded imperialist assumptions of Brontë's nineteenth-century novel" (103). The positioning of Jane's white Englishness against "the instability of Antoinette's Creole identity" (104) is reconfigured through Levy's July whose blackness, Tolan argues, "locates her at a still further remove from the imperial centre of British power" (104). Rewriting the Jane/ Bertha dynamic, *The Long Song* also temporarily shifts the power balance between the white mistress, Caroline and the black slave, July. While Robert claims that he loves "a negro girl. He loved July" (217), he could not marry her because it would "surely kill" (217) his father. Instead, he marries Caroline and keeps July as his mistress, swearing loyalty to her claiming, "You are my real wife, he told her. This is my real home, he said of their damp little room under the house" (225). When July becomes pregnant with Emily and goes into labour, Robert paced "the garden for hours and hours, biting hard upon his fingertips" (250). However, Caroline refused to acknowledge her husband's relationship with July and strenuously denied that the baby existed:

According to the missus, she had never, ever, ever, seen July with a child... Never had she heard a baby crying, nor whimpering around the house. No cooing ever seeped up from under her floor. To the missus's recollection, she had not once even heard

mention of a child. Her husband had never spoken the child's name at the dinner table, nor requested to have her brought to him after the meal. She had not chanced upon Robert rocking the child on the veranda. Nor had she ever found white christening clothes and a sweet wooden-faced doll among his belongings. Not one person in town, that the missus could recall, had ever whispered of the shame of Caroline Goodwin's husband keeping a negro woman with a bastard child ... in the same house, in the same house! (251)

Ironically, while Rochester and Grace Poole strive to conceal Bertha's existence in *Jane Eyre*, Jane constantly discovers evidence of her confinement on the third floor. In *The Long Song*, July flaunts her relationship with Robert and, yet, Caroline expunges all existence of the relationship and the baby from her consciousness.

However, the reversal of this power dynamic is precarious and soon ends. Robert's attitude towards July quickly changes when he fails to agree working hours with the former slaves. Violence breaks out at the plantation as the black homesteads are targeted by him, along with groups of white militia. In the aftermath of the violence, he returns to the house and as Tolan suggests, "Levy's young Rochester figure soon retreats to a retrenched colonialist racism, reasserting his previously disavowed racial privilege" (105). Robert begins to aggressively issue instructions to July and, for the first time, calls her Marguerite. Prior to this, Robert had insisted to Caroline that she should be called July but his decision to adopt Caroline's name for her symbolises the end of their relationship as he reduces her to the status of object. Tolan notes that in *Wild Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette is renamed Bertha by Rochester and while this "so diminishes Rhys's Antoinette" (105), this renaming of July by Caroline and, later, by Robert is met with total resistance from July. After the workers desert Amity, a distressed Robert vows to cut the cane himself. Attempting to dissuade him, July takes his arm. He lashes out at her and attempts to kill her with a machete, shouting "get

away from me, nigger, get away” (260) before Caroline intervenes to stop him. July is distraught by his dehumanising attack on her and, in Tolan’s view, she experiences a devastating “disintegration of her selfhood” (106) at this point in the novel. However, *The Long Song* differs significantly from *Wild Sargasso Sea* because, as Tolan claims, it does not end with the protagonist’s “unwritten but inevitable self-immolation but rather by the continuance of July’s narrative and the reclamation of her self-proclaimed authority over her constructed identity as the July of her authored text” (106).

Notably, the intertextual reference to Brontë in *The Long Song* underlines the type of narrative authority possessed by white women writers in contrast to black women writers. In “Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy in *Jane Eyre*,” Meyer notes that while Brontë refers to colonialism in all of her major fiction, she even wrote about it in her childhood and adolescent fiction. In fact, she wrote “hundreds of pages of fiction set in an imaginary British colony in Africa” (247) which has received critical attention from Brontë scholars. Meyer also states that Brontë’s juvenilia demonstrates her knowledge of events in the British Caribbean and notes also that “specific tortures used by West Indian Planters on rebellious slaves appear in Brontë’s early fiction” (247). Brontë also included a black female character called Quashia Quamina who rebelled against white colonists. Meyer notes that this character “bears the surname of the slave who led the Demerara uprising of 1823 in British Guiana, as well as the name derived from the racist epithet ‘Quashee’” (247). Arguably, even as a child, Brontë had the ability to authoritatively map the colonial landscape in her fiction. This is in sharp contrast with the narrative authority of Mary Prince which, as I have already outlined, had to be validated by multiple white sources.

Interestingly, *The Long Song* also examines the different social positions of white and black women in the nineteenth century by including an intertextual references to Brontë and other works by white female authors. For instance, July states that when Caroline Mortimer

taught her to read, she gave her a book which documented the lives of “two silly sisters—white women who were required to do no work—did spend their days fretting and crying over the findings of husbands” (197). This is potentially a reference to Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*, where two sisters, Elinor and Marianne, encounter difficulties finding suitable husbands and, as a result of the tradition of exclusive male inheritance, they are in a precarious social position. On the one hand, *The Long Song* also temporally and historically situates texts such as *Jane Eyre* and *Sense and Sensibility* alongside narratives such as *The History of Mary Prince* to underscore the vastly different material conditions of black and white women and, on the other hand, to illustrate the difference in status of white and black female authors. For instance, Austen’s text presented a conception of nineteenth century womanhood which privileges certain white bodies as ‘normal.’ Her characters were aristocratic women who upheld the moral values of British culture while black women were perceived as commodities to be exchanged. Austen’s characters upheld and institutionalised norms of marriage, motherhood, family life and domesticity; on the other hand, black slaves’ familial bonds were precarious due to the forced movement and natal alienation.

In *The Long Song*, July dismisses the women depicted in *Sense and Sensibility* as “silly” but arguably Caroline Mortimer perfectly encapsulates nineteenth century norms of womanhood and domesticity, described by Austen. The importance of marriage in the life of white Victorian women is mirrored through Caroline’s marital status in the novel. After the death of her husband in England, Caroline has no choice but to travel to Jamaica to live with her brother, John Howarth. When John dies, Caroline’s social position is indeterminate until she marries Robert Goodwin. Caroline’s reference to Austen reminds us of the insularity and privilege of Victorian aristocratic women. Like Austen’s characters, Caroline is safeguarded from any real hardship or poverty. However, her personal security and only source of power depends on a good marriage. As the mistress of Amity, Caroline initially romanticises

plantation life and wants to hold lavish parties, socialise with other planter families and sample the various foods the island has to offer, including the “breadfruit that was destined for the slaves’ table” (24). At twenty-three years of age, Caroline resembles Austen’s major characters, having spent most of her time “in the dappled shade of an apple tree by the edge of an English lawn” (22).

Furthermore, in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said cites Austen as an example of a novelist who prefigured many of the more overtly imperialist novelists such as Kipling or Conrad. When Austen was publishing her novels, Britain had important colonies in the Caribbean and South America. Said’s discussion of Austen focuses exclusively on *Mansfield Park* (1814) which contains references to Sir Thomas Bertram’s sugar plantation in Antigua. According to Said, Austen assumes the importance of an empire so that “no matter how isolated and insulated the English place, it requires overseas sustenance” (107). Said points out that “Britain’s great humanistic ideas, institutions and monuments which we still celebrate ahistorically to command our approval” (97) rarely reflected critically on colonialism or did little to “stand in the way of the accelerating imperial process” (97). For Said, novels such as *Mansfield Park* seem to take the existence of imperialism and slavery for granted. He describes Austen’s imagination as working through “a mode that we might call geographical and spatial clarification” (102). For instance, when Sir Thomas returns from regulating his affairs in the flagging sugar plantation in Antigua, he restores order and propriety to Mansfield Park. Said suggests that, in Austen’s view, Sir Thomas’s control of his homestead mirrors his influence over the plantation:

More clearly than anywhere else in her fiction, Austen here [in *Mansfield Park*] synchronises domestic with international authority, making it plain that the values associated with such higher things as ordination, law and propriety must be grounded firmly in actual rule over and possession of territory. She sees clearly

that to hold and rule Mansfield Park is to hold and rule an imperial estate in close, not to say inevitable association with it. What assures the domestic tranquillity and attractive harmony of one is the productivity and regulated discipline of the other. (104)

Moreover, he claims that Fanny Price's movements and social development from her small home to the larger estate of Mansfield Park correspond to the "larger more openly colonial movements of Sir Thomas" (106). Significantly, sugar plantations like Sir Thomas's Antigua estate would have used slaves to harvest the crop. Sir Thomas was an absentee landlord which was common in Caribbean plantations; however, he was required to travel to Antigua on urgent business. In the historical context of the novel, Sir Thomas's journey to Antigua occurs after the abolition of the slave trade in Britain in 1807. The abolition of the slave trade meant that the conditions of existing slaves on plantations had to be improved which may have necessitated the presence of the plantation owner.⁹⁰ While Austen's novel does not directly portray Sir Thomas Bertram in Antigua, the ethics of colonial slavery had been to the fore in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain and colonial slavery was certainly an important political issue in Britain in Austen's lifetime.⁹¹

Arguing against Said in *Jane Austen and the Context of Abolition* (2006), Gabrielle D.V. White argues that Austen was very much engaged with the issue of slavery. Her naval brother was an abolitionist and she was an admirer of the work of William Cowper who expressed anti-slavery views in his poetry and she quotes Cowper on several occasions in *Mansfield Park*. White discusses Austen's allusions and references to slavery in the Chawton novels: *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* (1815) and *Persuasion* (1817) and suggests that Austen was clearly influenced by abolitionist rhetoric.⁹² However, other critics such as Jon Mee and Susan Fraiman argue that Austen is primarily critical of androcentrism and is more concerned with the position of white upper-class women in British society. In his article "Austen's

Treacherous Ivory: Female Patriotism, Domestic Ideology and Empire,” Mee argues that Austen’s references to slavery, especially in *Mansfield Park*, are “a negative presence” (85) in the novel, which are overshadowed by the domestic agenda and “the issue of female participation in the nation” (85). For him, Austen’s focus on domestic management in *Mansfield Park* is part of a “patriotic discourse” (75) which promotes the role of white women in national affairs and, as a result, she cannot “easily impugn Empire” (85). Austen’s references to slavery in *Mansfield Park*, but also in *Emma*—when Jane Fairfax compares the position of governesses with that of slaves— suggest that her focus is primarily on the role of women in English society.⁹³ Mee further argues that Austen advanced a nationalist agenda and the idea that “women, especially gentlewomen, ought to be recognized as part of the nation as not as slaves” (84). Likewise, in her article “Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture and Imperialism,” Fraiman concurs that Austen is critical of primogeniture in *Mansfield Park* and the patriarchal nature of British society. While Fraiman points to Austen’s “feminist critique of authority” (815), she suggests that the “imperialist gesture” (813) in Austen’s references to slavery and colonialism in her novels is really the exploitation of “the symbolic value of slavery while ignoring slaves as suffering and resistant historical subjects” (813). Austen appropriates the suffering of slaves as a metaphor for the condition of privileged white women without engaging with brutality of slavery and the actual condition of slaves. *The Long Song* is, perhaps, pointing to the subordinate position of white women in Britain which, at the time, did not transcend racial and class prejudices and form solidarity with black women.

The intertextual references to these canonical works in *The Long Song* point to the disparity between the English female authors who were imbued with the authority to discuss slavery and colonialism and the racialised, female Other who occupied a marginalised position in literary space and who was not deemed to possess narrative authority. As Said

argues in *Culture and Imperialism*, the production of literary texts in the nineteenth century was part of a spatialising process of locating England at the centre of the world map.

Furthermore, unlike female slaves, middle-class and aristocratic, white, English women such as Brontë and Austen had leisure time to write and produce their texts. Said makes this point in relation to literary production and representation:

The capacity to represent, portray, characterize and depict is not easily available to just any member of just any society; moreover, the “what” and “how” in the representation of “things”, while allowing for considerable individual freedom, are circumscribed and socially regulated (95).

The “capacity to represent” referred to an elite group of white men and women who had time to write and the financial means to publish their work. Moreover, only specific material was considered socially and culturally acceptable for publication and widespread dissemination.

Arguably, *The Long Song* highlights the way in which hierarchical literary space reproduces the uneven geographic and human cartographies of colonialism and slavery.⁹⁴ The novel pays particular attention to the role of the female plantocracy in the dissemination of nineteenth century perspectives on slavery. The comparison between black and white women’s experiences of slavery and imperialism is articulated in terms of both literary space and material space on the plantation. For instance, July is eager to educate Caroline Mortimer about the horrors of slavery in a section of the novel which, at once, impinges upon the perceived pieties of nineteenth century white femininity and also highlights the disparity between black and white women’s experience of slavery. The novel graphically documents the abuse of slaves, including reference to “the dungeon” (158) at Amity. Caroline Mortimer is portrayed as having a “useless ignorance” (159) of the dungeon until July leads her down the “narrow passage” (158) to the “two arched cells of the prison” (158). At first, in the darkness, Caroline hears only “the scraping of metal, the clatter of shackles [and] the

complaint of hoarse voices” (158). When she enters the crowded dungeon, Caroline witnesses several inmates pinned to the walls, including a naked woman “chained to the floor by her neck” (158) and a female child “encased with a stock by her ankles” (158). She flees from the scene in distress and insists that she “will take the next ship back to England” (159). July admonishes Caroline’s for her reluctance to confront abuse on the plantation, stating that her mistress had been informed previously about the atrocities committed at Amity but had to be “begged” (158) several times to visit the dungeon. Caroline had repeatedly claimed that “she had not the time,” (158) indicating her unconscious refusal to accept that slaves were abused under her management. As part of her narrative, July reproaches Caroline for her “ignorance” and notes that “every negro upon the plantation, even those within the kitchen, feared [the dungeon’s] viciousness” (129). However, Caroline seemed unaware of the “pitiless conditions” (129) there. The novel extends Prince’s critique of the abuses of slavery by reinforcing the imbalance between black and white experiences on the plantation, contrasting Caroline’s comfortable life—which typifies the experience of the female planter class—with that of the slaves. Moreover, Levy’s novel emphasises difficulties in providing an authentic account of this period and alludes to the absences and gaps in official accounts of slavery from slaves whose experiences were never recorded and can now only be charted imaginatively through fiction.

Furthermore, in an attempt to re-negotiate white nineteenth century depictions of slavery, July wants to reclaim her life through the narrative rather than having a white writer represent or frame her story. She suggests that the majority of white accounts of the period “might wish you to view [a slave’s] life as worthless” (280). In contrast to Mary Prince’s religious conversion, July is also extremely critical of the authoritarian values of the Christian missionaries in Jamaica. As previously mentioned, she discusses the adoption of her son by the Kinsman family. She realises later that her son’s adoptive mother Jane Kinsman had

written an article about the adoption in the *Baptist Magazine*. July was critical of the “sentimental essay full-full of self-regard that was so beloved of white women at this time” (150) which described how July begged on her knees for her son to be taken by the white family. July concedes that she begged Jane Kinsman in order to garner her sympathy and to manipulate her into taking the child. Directly addressing the reader, July expresses annoyance that white women are “belching out some nonsensical tale on my behalf” (150). The invocation of these Baptist publications is a reminder that most of the information about colonial slavery and plantation life was disseminated by whites. These texts formed part of the hierarchy of knowledge which, in many cases, justified colonial slavery or framed the abolition of slavery as an indication of white European moral superiority. In her book on British colonialism in Jamaica entitled *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (2002), Catherine Hall argues that Evangelical missionaries used their missionary press to emphasize the Christian virtues of black men and women and in order to humanise them for their white readership. Of course, religious conversion functioned as a method of control and discipline by moulding slaves and ex-slaves into docile, moral subjects.⁹⁵ Baptist texts contributed to this type of social control. Publications from missionaries and, also, from planters and travellers produced what Hall describes as the “Jamaica of the mind” (174) creating an imagined geography of the colonies and constructing the African subject through a predominantly white perspective.

In her seminal text on travel writing *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2008), Mary Louise Pratt argues that travel writing was an essential part of constructing an image of the world for Europeans and played a central role in “legitimizing scientific authority and its global project alongside Europe’s other ways of knowing the world and being in it” (29). Travel writing produced a “Eurocentred form of global or planetary consciousness” (4) (Pratt’s emphasis) which mapped out non-European spaces and

contributed— in literary form— to the conditions of domination and relations of power between Europe and those affected by European colonial expansion. Pratt describes the difference between male and female authors of travel narratives; accounts by men were “quests for achievement fuelled by fantasies of transformation and dominance” (165), while female narratives combined “politics and the personal” (165) and were “quests for self-realization” (165). Female travellers’ identity was rooted in “personal independence, property and social authority” (156) and they occupied a privileged world of servants where their “superior” status as white Europeans was unquestioned and where “meals, baths, blankets and lamps appear from nowhere” (156). Pratt is interested in the ways in which “people on the receiving end of empire” (7) and how those occupying these “nowhere” spaces engage with Europeans and “talk back” (7).

Discussing the specific contribution of white women writers in the West Indies in her book *Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939* (2004), Evelyn O’Callaghan examines the ways that gender and class informed the white experience of life in the colonies. Noting that the colonial space was perceived as a masculine space in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, O’Callaghan argues that travelling to and living in the colonies allowed white women a measure of freedom and, also, a sense of fulfilment outside of marriage and domesticity. Away from the confines of Victorian Britain, white women conceived of the possibility of “a new beginning, away from the demands of families, brothers, fathers, suitors and husbands” (93). Ultimately, white women who managed plantations and wrote about their experiences in the West Indies challenged “the norms of white femininity” (30). In addition, in their respective roles as servant and domestic manager, O’Callaghan emphasises the “enforced intimacy” (52) of black and white women in the plantation house. Therefore, she claims that white women’s writing offers important and alternative perspectives on colonialism, slavery and daily life in the colonies.

By engaging intertextually with travel-writing from the eighteenth century, *The Long Song* critiques the privileged status of white plantocracy women and utilises travel-writing to highlight incidences of slave resistance against planter society. Talking back to white accounts of slavery and colonialism, July states that she is not interested in authenticating her experiences for a white readership. Indeed, she adopts a critical view of white female writers of the time stating that there are multiple volumes by white women depicting life on a plantation and lamenting the scarcity of food and the dullness of Jamaican society:

Go to any shelf that groans under a weight of books and there, wrapped in leather and stamped in gold, will be volumes whose contents will find you meandering through the puff and twaddle of some white lady's mind. You will see trees aplenty, birds of every hue and oh, a hot, hot sun residing there. That white missus will have you acquainted with all the many tribulations of her life upon a Jamaican sugar plantation before you have barely opened the cover. Two pages upon the scarcity of beef. Five more upon the want of a new hat to wear with her splendid pink taffeta dress. No butter but only a wretched alligator pear again is surely a hardship worth the ten pages it took to describe it. Three chapters is not an excess to lament upon a white woman of discerning mind who finds herself adrift in a society too dull for her. And as for the indolence and stupidity of her slaves (be sure you have a handkerchief to dab away your tears), only need of sleep would stop her taking several more volumes to pronounce upon that most troublesome of subjects (8).

In this passage, July mockingly critiques the white plantocracy, especially the women, who commonly produced journals documenting their travels in the colonies. These women—like the fictional character Caroline Mortimer—are portrayed as self-important with little insight or experience of genuine poverty, hardship or the brutality of slavery. The

unavailability of the latest fashions and detailed discussions of the hot climate preoccupy white women, suggesting that they do not engage with ethical or political questions such as the very visible mistreatment of slaves on the island and the abolitionist movement. The use of spatial terms such as “meandering” to describe the “white lady’s mind” and “adrift” to allude to the position of white women in Jamaica conveys the expansive space available to them and underlines the ability of white women to move and circulate openly within vast territories. These women can meander and drift while the movements of black females are curtailed and monitored. Nevertheless, these white women create imaginative spaces in their travelogues and diaries which have been reified by white culture. By suggesting that the “weight of books” containing these biased views are “stamped in gold,” the novel conveys the affluent patronage which underlines white women’s authority and their imaginative freedom. The fact that these women can devote chapters to the description of scenery and the type of food available on the plantation reinforces their power over literary and material space. White women are imbued with authority and the ability to physically and imaginatively map the space of the plantation and the colony.

Arguably, July’s critique of white women’s writing, in the aforementioned passage refers indirectly to *Lady Nugent’s Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 -1805* which Levy cites in the bibliography for *The Long Song*. Maria Nugent was the wife of the Governor of Jamaica, George Nugent and her journal depicts the Governor’s official duties as well as social events among the planter class.⁹⁶ The journal was not intended for publication but was possibly written as a record for her children. Lady Nugent’s life in the West Indies consisted of lunches, dinners and balls with elite members of Jamaican society. She frequently alludes to the picaresque scenery and wildlife in Jamaica. She also regularly discusses the climate and laments that the “heat was so dreadful” (14). Her attitude to her slaves is paternalistic and she recalls, for example, that she permitted her servants to hold a

Christmas party since she did “not want to deprive them of their short-lived and baby-like pleasure” (44). Lady Nugent appears to treat her slaves well, teaching them to read and write. She is determined to convert her slaves to Christianity and is openly critical of white men who live “in a state of licentiousness with their female slaves” (87). However, she is not in favour of the abolition of slavery:

Amused myself with reading the evidence before the House of Commons on the part of the petitioners for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. As far as I can see and hear of the ill-treatment of slaves, I think what they have to say upon the subject is very greatly exaggerated. Individuals, I make no doubt, occasionally abuse the power they possess but generally speaking, I believe the slaves are extremely well used. (86)

It is clear that Lady Nugent experienced very little hardship on the island and was very much couched in the privileged world of the plantocracy.⁹⁷ Her patronising views of slaves as child-like and in need of religious salvation were characteristic of those held by Baptist ministries on the island. In *The Intimate Empire*, Gillian Whitlock argues that travel writing allowed writers to “authorise themselves as colonial subjects” (83). She suggests that for middle-class, white women in Victorian England, travel-writing was a powerful process of self-creation. Producing accounts of the colonial encounter was a way for white women to assert their autonomy. For Whitlock, travel-writing was “fundamental to the triumphant narrative of Empire, but it was also a genre where the fragilities and contingencies of Englishness emerge” (77). For instance, English racial and cultural superiority and the ideology of Victorian femininity were reinforced by these accounts of life in the colonies.⁹⁸ At the same time, even brief references to slavery and the physical and sexual exploitation of slaves foreground nineteenth century abolitionist debates about the ethics of a society which condoned slavery.⁹⁹ By ironically mocking travel writing, the novel destabilises the

relationship between white women's movements and the material landscape of the plantation. By prioritising black orientations, spaces and voices, Levy provides an alternative geography and highlights what she describes in "The Writing of *The Long Song*", as the absence of writing that was "not filtered at the time through a white understanding or serving a white narrative" (5).

In order to highlight the alternative geographies of the plantation, *The Long Song* alludes to incidences of slave resistance in another travelogue entitled *Domestic Manners and Social Customs of the White, Coloured and Negro Populations of the West Indies* by Mrs Carmichael, an aristocratic Scottish woman and an apologist for slavery, who documented her life in Trinidad and St. Vincent. In an intertextual reference to Mrs Carmichael's text, July recalls that Caroline Mortimer requested that the Irish linen tablecloths are used for Christmas Day celebrations.¹⁰⁰ She later notices that the slaves have used old, soiled, white bed sheets instead. Later, when Caroline arrives at Amity for the first time, the slaves pretend they do not understand her commands, despite obeying the instructions of the planter's Creole wife, Agnes. Caroline arrives at the house and removes her bonnet waiting for the slaves to "curtsey" (24) and "offer her some light refreshment" (24). Instead, the slaves laugh at her and she hears a female slave commenting on her weight: "come, see how broad is she!" (26). In "The Writing of *The Long Song*," Levy notes that Mrs Carmichael's journal describes a similar incident where she recalls "the negro women are such connoisseurs of dress. Standing by I heard them criticise everything I wore, both in materials and make" (8, qtd in Levy).

As O'Callaghan argues in *Women Writing the West Indies*, specific references and constructions of "other" women in white women's literature often points to an "alternative, even counter-discursive construction of the colonial Caribbean" (142) which undermines white authority. Significantly, as Levy suggests in "The Writing of *The Long Song*," female

slaves' defiance and resistance is often played out in the largely "unrecorded domestic history" (6) of the private sphere rather than in official public spaces.¹⁰¹ Notably, in *Natural Rebels*, Hilary Beckles also emphasises the crucial role of women in the resistance to slavery. Describing female slaves as "the protectors of social culture" (172) in the slave community, he suggests that women were critical to the forging of resistance strategies and the "reproduction of anti-slavery ideology" (172). Arguably, the domestic arena of the plantation house and grounds often became spaces of resistance where both male and slaves purposely defied their masters in order to disrupt the running of the plantation.¹⁰² In *Slavery and Social Death*, Orlando Patterson notes that slave holders deployed various ideological strategies such as stereotyping the slaves as "lying, cowardly, [and] lazy" (338). Performing these stereotypes functioned as a type of psychological retaliation on the part of the slaves who "served while concealing [their] souls" (338). Patterson notes a well-known Jamaican slave proverb to "play fool, to catch wise" (338) aptly encapsulates this method of subversion and autonomy.¹⁰³

Likewise, in *The Long Song*, the house slaves at Amity deploy subversive strategies to circumvent the daily running of the house. The novel expands on moments of resistance recorded in travelogues such as Mrs Carmichael's *Domestic Manners*. Examples of defiance in the novel include when male slaves, Godfrey and Byron, allow livestock and fowl into the house, terrifying Caroline. In another example, Caroline instructs a band of black slave fiddlers to play at her Christmas party but the music they play is unrecognisable and out of tune. It transpires that the musicians played badly purposely and were quite accomplished fiddlers. What should have been a demonstration of the white planter's power over captive slave bodies is mocked and undermined by the subversive strategies of the band. In another incident, shortly after she is elevated to the status of lady's maid, July hides Caroline's whip so she cannot punish the slaves. By disrupting the daily running of the house, the slaves are

shifting the balance of power and renegotiating the plantation house as a site of resistance. Later on, when Robert Goodwin rejects her in favour of his wife, July plants a dish containing hundreds of “cockroaches...beetles, centipedes and tumble-bugs and strange black slithery things that squirmed within the shitty pit-holes” (271) on the dining-table during the evening meal. She has spent days “diligently hoarding” (271) these insects in order to avenge Robert for the way “she [had] just been discarded” (271). In the first chapter, I argued that *By the Sea* describes acts of refusal such as Saleh’s silent protest and the re-negotiation of the detention centre by asylum seekers as a positive biopolitics; in this chapter, I argue that by mapping and imagining acts of defiance and subterfuge on the colonial plantation, *The Long Song* gestures towards those largely unrecorded private spaces of resistance.

Equally, the novel incorporates elements of the grotesque and the farcical to disorient and challenge the reader and, primarily, to highlight the horrifying elements of slavery.¹⁰⁴ The use of farce also serves to highlight omissions or events which are too traumatic to be recounted or have excluded from historical accounts of slavery. Like Prince’s text, *The Long Song* excludes, but indirectly refers to, certain moments of narrative trauma. As a result of Levy’s ironic style, some of the most traumatic incidences in the novel are interrupted by farcical and grotesque interludes. These narrative elisions and digressions jolt and discomfit the reader and become a source of narrative tension, which ultimately emphasise the gaps in the historiography of slavery. One of the most significant examples from the novel is the section which culminates in the death of Nimrod, Thomas Kinsman’s father, and the subsequent hanging of July’s mother, Kitty. During the 1831 Christmas Rebellion and the subsequent reprisals, July hides out at the deserted Amity plantation house. Her owner, John Howarth, has joined the British militia and her mistress, Caroline Mortimer, has fled to the port to board a ship leaving the island. During this time, Nimrod, a free black man, becomes July’s lover. Unbeknownst to July, John Howarth and Caroline return to the plantation house,

as the rebellion has been quashed. When July and Nimrod realise John has returned, they hide in his bedroom to avoid being discovered. Depressed by the atrocities he witnessed as part of the militia, John goes straight to his room where he shoots himself. If his death is declared a suicide, Caroline Mortimer will lose her rights to the plantation. Consequently, the overseer Tam Dewar devises a plan to frame Nimrod—whom he discovers hiding in the house, alongside July—for the murder. In a farcical comic interlude, Caroline advises Dewar not to kill Nimrod as “he hasn’t finished my garden yet” (118). The overseer momentarily considers Caroline’s request before giving a “scornful laugh” (118) and shooting Nimrod, in front of July, wounding him but not killing him. In the ensuing panic, July charges at the overseer, theatrically knocking him and her mistress together. She then hurriedly helps Nimrod to escape by locking Caroline and Tam Dewar in the house. She manages to carry him to the workers’ village but he dies. July intervenes in the narrative, at this point, and changes the course of the narrative to domestic matters in the Kinsman household. She addresses the reader and comments on what she perceives as “wasting toil on the pressing of petticoats” (121), a task which seemingly preoccupies her daughter-in-law, Lillian. This comical interlude and shift in both chronology and temporality, in the middle of a traumatic event, disorients the reader and can be perceived as a textual strategy to emphasise the omission of Nimrod’s death from the narrative.

After the petticoats interlude, the narrative moves forward. However, the action switches to Kitty who had spent the day manuring. Kitty detested the time-consuming job of spreading manure on the cane fields and, particularly, the odious smell which lingered on her skin and clothes. Unable to cleanse herself of the smell, Kitty “came to smell like shit” (123) as flies continuously encircled her as went she about her other chores and in the market. Ultimately, Kitty began to see herself as “shit, walking tall” (123). Again, scatology masks the true horror being committed all around the plantation. The reader learns that, at this point,

Tam Dewar has escaped from the house and a manhunt ensues for John Howarth's "murderers." At the same time, white militia are burning and pillaging the farms and houses of former slaves all over the island, in reprisal for the rebellion. Eventually, Tam Dewar discovers July in the village and raises his pistol to shoot her. She attacks him and he violently beats her. Kitty, who has returned to village, intervenes to save her daughter and mortally wounds Dewar with her machete. She is sentenced to be hanged for her crime. July witnesses her mother's death, the murder of her biological father by her mother and the death of her lover, but there is no narrative intervention in the text which reveals her feelings.

Later in the novel, July speaks about the aftermath of her mother's death and addresses the reader commenting "if your storyteller were to tell of life with July through those times, you would hear no sweet melody but forbidding discord...You would pass over those pages and beg me to lead you to better days" (146). July states that it is difficult for her to confront this period of her life but her son encourages her to document it. She declares that writing about it means that she will "suffer every little thing again" (147). Following William Andrews, Saidiya Hartman discusses the significance of narrative omissions, ellipses and elisions in the traditional slave narrative in *Scenes of Subjection*. She describes these elisions and gaps as displaying and displacing "the searing wounds of the violated and mute body" (108) and as "literal and figurative cuts in the narrative" (108). Levy's novel contains more overt temporal and chronological shifts to circumvent the most traumatic experiences of the protagonist. As illustrated, the novel circumnavigates the most traumatic incidents in July's life which remain closed off from the reader by incorporating elements of farce. Moreover, July claims that she omits some of the *most* traumatic material for the sake of the reader stating "you [the reader] would turn your head away. You would cry lies!" (146). By suggesting that the reader cannot cope with this material, July draws attention to the fact that it is absent from the novel and points to the horrors of slavery which are too traumatic to be

revealed and cannot be found in the official historiography of slavery.¹⁰⁵ These elisions and omissions in the narrative point to an enclosed space which cannot be confronted or revealed. At the same time, it is important to note that the reader that the novel addresses is a contemporary twenty-first century reader who is still haunted by the legacy of slavery.¹⁰⁶ The novel is, perhaps, suggesting that contemporary British people have yet to acknowledge the way slavery has shaped modern society and contemporary concepts of the human.¹⁰⁷ As a work of metafiction, *The Long Song* utilises elements of the slave narrative and deploys farce to emphasise the erasure of the legacy of slavery from twenty-first century British geopolitical and cultural space.

In the final part of the novel, the relationship between the colony and metropolis is reversed. July recounts Thomas Kinsman's life and career in England, where he made his fortune. The novel ironically situates Kinsman in the hub of the British publishing industry in nineteenth century London. According to July, her son developed an interest in reading from an early age, not as a result of his immersion in a literary centre such as London, but from a chance meeting with Jacob Walker, "a skinny black man from the Americas" (292) who gave him Penny Magazines to read, when Kinsman was out walking near St Mary's Church in Hornsey. Here the novel incorporates an actual historical figure who was a slave and later a domestic servant for George Long and his wife Harriet. Walker moved from Virginia to London with the Long family in 1828. In England, slavery was illegal and Jacob was granted his freedom.¹⁰⁸ The novel invokes the images of black men such as Walker and Kinsman wandering the streets of London and reverses the actions of the imperial explorer's encounter with the colonies, by mapping, exploring and territorialising the British city. In addition, the novel remaps British literary space when Thomas recalls his time as an apprenticeship at Gray's Publishing House. Kinsman's adoptive father, James Kinsman "signed a deed that tied

Thomas to a Mr Linus Gray for seven years – not only for instruction into the trade of print, but also to board within his household for the duration” (293).

July describes her son’s immersion in English culture while working for Gray where he read works from Dickens, Shakespeare, Shelley and Wordsworth. Gray’s publishing company is situated in Water Lane, Fleet Street, which was synonymous with the British Press until the 1980s. Historically, Fleet Street also has a long literary tradition with many famous writers such as Samuel Johnson, Alfred Tennyson, William Thackeray, Charles Dickens and Mark Twain frequenting the area. The presence of a fictional black printer in this area of London provides a reminder of the increase in publication of literature by black authors—such as Olaudah Equiano—who in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, posed a challenge to the notion of literary production as the preserve of white men. As a publisher, Kinsman is imbued with a certain power and he develops a particular interest in the publication of literary and philosophical discourses on slavery. For instance, he publishes Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* (1791). He is also familiar with the pro-slavery polemic of Thomas Carlyle and the emancipationist rhetoric of John Stuart Mill. Kinsman’s reference to these philosophers demonstrates that both pro- and anti-slavery discourse was largely dominated by whites. Publications about slavery by upper-class white men, like Carlyle and Mill, were imbued with authority in contrast to publications by former slaves whose perspectives had to be legitimised by whites.¹⁰⁹

By positioning Kinsman in London, however, Levy’s text re-negotiates the material and literary landscape. Like July, Thomas Kinsman is a figure of resistance in the text. In addition, Kinsman’s transgression of geographic and cultural boundaries in the nineteenth century London can be compared to Latif Mahmud and Saleh Omar’s border-crossings and remapping of space in twentieth and twenty-first century Europe in *By the Sea*. Kinsman also questions nineteenth century philosophical, religious and political doctrines. His employer

Linus Gray sponsored the education of his workers, including Kinsman, by establishing “a club for mutual improvement” (297) and Thomas Paine’s text, in particular, was an important source for the marginalised and underprivileged workers “both English and negro ... [who considered] themselves to be foully wronged by this modern life” (298). The members of the club were also religious sceptics who “prodded and poked for any evidence that the stories within the Old and New Testament were based upon truth and not just tales of someone’s making” (298). Later, when Kinsman inherits Linus Gray’s estate, he returns to Jamaica and establishes his own printing business. Thomas has effectively used print media to navigate and remap literary and geographic space.

As I mentioned in the first chapter, in her book *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed discusses the ways in which public spaces and public institutions are largely “shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others” (132). She suggests that white bodies dominate the social space and that the “surfaces of social as well as bodily space *record* the repetition of acts and the *passing by* of some and not others” (Ahmed’s emphasis) (135). Arguably, Levy’s novel emphasises the role of literature and the printing press in constructing and reproducing the social space as white and as being oriented around white bodies. The novel also underlines the presence of black people in British social and institutional space such as the publishing industry, which, as Ahmed argues, may have often gone unrecorded in hegemonic white social space. Following Nirmal Puwar, she notes that when bodies “arrive that seem *out of place*, it involves disorientation” (Ahmed’s emphasis) (135). She claims that certain bodies can alter space, making it appear “slantwise or oblique” (135); for example, the presence of black bodies in white space “produces disorientating effects” (170). It is in these moments of disorientation where perceptions are altered and spaces are reshaped. Like Saleh Omar’s remapping of the detention centre in *By the Sea*, it can be argued that, in *The Long Song*, Thomas Kinsman’s involvement in publishing, as well as his interest in politics and, of

course, his wandering around the streets of London functions as an imaginative geography and is a way of reorienting the social space of nineteenth century Britain.

Upon his return to Jamaica, the white upper-classes discriminate against Kinsman and he struggles to obtain any custom from white, Christian businessmen, despite his regular appearance at church. The British merchants and planters could not understand how “a hottentot with not even one drop of white blood within him [finds] himself proprietor of a print office” (301) and believed that Kinsman “walked too tall” (302). However, he is given his first major contract to publish *The Trelawney Mercury* by Isaac Cecil Levy, “a Jew who had never once attended the church” (302). The fact that Levy ascribes her own name to this character calls to mind the absence of ancestry records for descendants of slavery. Levy blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality by referring to a fictional ancestor in a manner that, at once, conveys the historical destruction of kinship ties as a result of slavery and the absence of records of slave lineage. As a Jew, Cecil Levy is also a member of an ethnic group with a long history of migration, rootlessness and racial oppression. In the interview with Susan Alice Fischer, Levy notes that she may have Jewish ancestry because “there was a huge Jewish population in Jamaica” (136). She points to the presence of a lot of old synagogues there because Jewish people came from North Africa and Portugal to settle in Jamaica. While Gurnah pointed to the various ethnic backgrounds of the English characters in *By the Sea* to undermine the monolithic concept of national identity; similarly, Levy highlights complex migratory connections in her fiction as a way of “confounding people’s understanding of a place” (136).

In another reference to the complex connections underpinning this novel, July is reunited with her son through a court case in the final pages of the novel, while a court case is also the last recorded appearance of Mary Prince. The inclusion of a court case in the novel could be interpreted as an act of solidarity with Mary Prince and a rebuttal of the charge of

criminality levelled against her. The novel presents an alternative geography of deprivation and survival which characterised the lives of slaves. July had stolen fowl and was squatting on the deserted Amity plantation. She appeared in court accused of stealing. However, in a direct address to the reader, July freely admits stealing two hens to feed herself. She recounts the court scene from the comfort of her home with her son and recalls that her face was “pinched with starvation” (284) and her body was so “stooped that the flimsy tattered rags of the dress she wears appear like a weight for her to carry” (284) in contrast to the “fat-bellied, bewhiskered” (284), white Judge. July’s circumstances and the harshness of her existence meant that she was forced to steal to survive. In court, she denies the accusation, swearing on the bible, she states, “Lord strike me down if me not speak true” (287). Eventually, July’s case is dismissed due to lack of evidence. In the first chapter, I suggested that *By the Sea* alludes to the lack of genuine ethical engagement towards asylum seekers by the British state and the immigration authorities; likewise, *The Long Song* mocks the white, upper-class strictures of the British legal system which symbolises the rationalism of Europe, contrasting July’s emaciated appearance with that of the fat, white British judge. Christian moral codes and British legal doctrines seem hypocritical and completely incompatible with the extreme deprivation and impoverishment of slave life. July’s reality and her choices extend beyond the remit of traditional western Christian and legal values and constitute a disclosure of a different ethical space. Her actions cannot be adequately ethically-defined under British legal norms or the Christian ideology represented in the novel by abolitionists and Baptist missionaries. Legal discourses, as well as literature, philosophy and religious doctrine constructed the slave as subject and the novel conveys the ways in which slaves’ lives were spatialised by various nineteenth century discourses.

In the afterword of July’s narrative, Thomas Kinsman appeals to readers for information about the whereabouts of his half-sister Emily. Emily is July’s daughter with

plantation owner Robert Goodwin, who had been taken from July and relocated to England, where she passes as white. However, Thomas cautions that “in England the finding of Negro blood within a family is not always met with rejoicing” (308) and that the discovery of her real mother’s identity might be too unsettling for Emily. Thomas is acknowledging that Emily is enjoying a certain status and lifestyle associated with the white planter class and this life would be jeopardised if her ancestry was revealed. The social mobility associated with white skin is discussed by Christina Sharpe in her book *Monstrous Intimacies* (2010). Here she argues that the ability “to pass into and pass on the signatory power of (future) whiteness appears as the only space of complete freedom that can be imagined” (22). White is reconfigured as “positive inheritance” (22) and those black people who do not claim “proximity to whiteness in this space...become the sole visible bearers of the trauma of the survival of slavery and racism” (22). In *The Long Song*, Emily’s ability to pass as white unburdens her from being a “visible bearer” of the history of slavery. Her absence haunts the novel and highlights what Christina Sharpe describes as the way “scenes of subjection [are rewritten] as freedom” (23). Privileging white ancestry erases the violence perpetuated by whites during slavery and conceals the inherent racism in modern rights discourse which is rooted in white values and ideology. Emily has attained a degree of freedom through the displacement and disavowal of her black ancestry. The request for information about Emily’s whereabouts reminds the reader that July has been robbed of her parental rights in relation to both Emily and Thomas Kinsman. Likewise, the absence of Emily from the novel emphasises the destruction of kinship ties among slave families and the gaps in the historiography of slavery.¹¹⁰

The Long Song at once provides a critique of slavery and, also, of post-modern British society which has still to come to terms with the history of slavery. In an interview with Nicola Barranger about the legacy of slavery, Levy discusses the difficulty of writing the

novel: “it was difficult for me. It was a real confrontation. I was going to have to confront the society [Britain] I live in and enjoy and love.” This confrontation with the trauma of slavery and its continuing significance in Britain is the challenge that the novel poses.¹¹¹ The publication of *The Long Song* prompts Britain to confront both its past and present, which is built on the remnants of slavery.¹¹² While Britain has engaged with its colonial past, it has yet to confront the role of slavery in British colonial history on a similar cultural and historical scale as the United States.¹¹³ Additionally, the novel undermines the pluralist ethos of a post-modern society such as Britain which supposedly embraces cultural difference. It brings to light spaces which have been concealed and overcomes silences imposed by traditional literary and geopolitical hegemony. The trauma of slavery is embedded in British culture and the novel reminds us that the vocabulary of modern freedom, rooted in the human rights discourse which resulted from abolitionism, is socially, culturally and ideologically entrenched in the politics of slavery.¹¹⁴ This resultant ideological concept of freedom, which underlines modern concepts of democracy, is actually central to continuing forms of exploitation and domination. *The Long Song* demonstrates that freedom—which emanated from abolitionist discourse—is based on a system of exchange which dehumanises certain black bodies and conceals black spaces.

As I have argued, *The Long Song* foregrounds the role of nineteenth century literary and philosophical texts in the creation of racial identities which are still relevant today. The novel conveys the sense of dislocation and alienation experienced by plantation slaves and alludes to the ways in which slaves’ bodies were monitored and controlled on the plantation. Moreover, the regulation of bodies on the plantation became a model for the biopolitical control which characterises the space known as the camp in twentieth and twenty-first century Europe. *The Long Song* also conveys the challenges faced by slaves and former slaves in creating a literary space for self-expression. By emphasising the spatialising

function of literary texts, the novel undermines the dominance of white literary space and emphasises the subversive strategies deployed by slaves in order to reshape the material space. *The Long Song* demonstrates the disciplinary function of literature and suggests that black literary texts can reconfigure hegemonic literary space. The novel also calls for an examination of the continuing effects of slavery on concepts of the human in post-modernity by emphasising the way slavery influences contemporary racist discourse and current conceptions of the human.¹¹⁵

4. Conclusion

This study has examined the biopolitical control and regulation of racialised bodies in geopolitical and literary space in *By the Sea* and *The Long Song*. I have argued that the novels demonstrate the ways in which white hegemony has controlled the representation of black populations in Western society, from the publication of slave narratives in the nineteenth century to the representation of displaced or stateless people by governments and NGOs in twenty-first century society. At the same time, both novels demonstrate that the contemporary construction of the human is derived from Enlightenment concepts of identity which emanate from a white, masculine norm and is based on the abjection of blackness.

By undermining the dominance of white social and literary space, *By the Sea* and *The Long Song* focus on counter-narratives of marginalised black lives—in both public and private spaces—which have been written out of, but continue to affect, contemporary British society. They also demonstrate the importance of acknowledging and confronting the violence of colonial history in order to transform Britain into a genuinely democratic space. Arguably, as *By the Sea* and *The Long Song* illustrate, the failure to confront the history of colonialism, slavery and racism manifests in the creation of border or abject zones for asylum seekers and the disavowal of black lives from the British history, culture and society. While this study highlights the disciplinary function of literature, I have argued that these counter-narratives signal a disclosure of black space which, on the one hand, challenges the hegemonic narrative of the nation as the primary mode of identification and spatial organisation and, on the other hand, undermines the teleological narrative of European progress by highlighting the repetitive cycle of racism which pervades European history.

While I have argued that Gurnah's novel deconstructs monolithic categories of racial and national identity by pointing to transcultural and transnational bonds among human

beings, Levy's novel is more focused on the importance of recognising the implications of colonial slavery for contemporary Britain and, also, the contribution of black people to British history and identity. However, my analysis of both novels also raises important questions about current discourses on multiculturalism and diversity in post-slavery society. By querying the contemporary model of the human, both novels suggest that social policies of inclusion and diversity are flawed because they conceive of rights in terms of national or ethnic belonging which disavows marginalised groups and racialised bodies. Instead, the novels stress the importance of questioning restrictive, monolithic stories of ethnicity in order to promote more ethical and democratic modes of affiliation.¹¹⁶

Additionally, this study demonstrates the relevance of Agamben's recent work on Foucauldian biopolitics to postcolonial literature, migration studies and race studies. However, the analysis of subjectivity, race and space in *By the Sea* and *The Long Song* suggests that Agamben's concept of bare life is too rigid.¹¹⁷ By focusing on the border between life and death, Agamben does not account for experiences of bare life based on gender and racial difference. Equally, his discussion of biopolitics/thanatopolitics is concerned with the legal status of life; however, the novels complicate the figure of life and expand upon Agamben's analysis by emphasising the moral economy underlying biopolitics.

Furthermore, my project on biopolitics is timely because Foucault and Agamben's work has recently been analysed and reconfigured by scholars of race, colonialism and gender. For instance, sociologist Ronit Lentin has reformulated Agamben's concept of "bare life" in her feminist analysis of Israeli feminist peace activism in her article "No Woman's Law will Rot this State: the Israeli Racial State and Feminist Resistance." Most notably, Agamben has been frequently criticised for ignoring the relationship between totalitarianism in Europe and imperial expansion. Markedly, David Atkinson has noted Agamben's silence on his native Italy's colonial past in his article "Encountering Bare Life in Italian Libya and

Colonial Amnesia in Agamben.” Discussing the colonial genocide of Cyrenaican nomads by Italian colonial forces in 1930s, Atkinson argues that individuals were reduced to “bare life” in concentration camps in Cyrenaica (modern Libya). The failure by Agamben to acknowledge these camps as states of exception is proof, for Atkinson, that the “colonial record remains a fleeting, elusive aspect of Italian memory” (169). Further analysis of colonialism and postcolonial studies in connection with Agamben’s discussion of *homo sacer*, states of exception and the camp can be found in the anthology *Agamben and Colonialism* (2012). More recently, Alexander G. Weheliye’s study entitled *Habeas Viscus: Racialising Assemblages, Biopolitics and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014) focuses on biopolitics and race; it engages with the work of Foucault and Agamben in conjunction with the writing of black feminists Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter.¹¹⁸

Perhaps the most significant contemporary application of Agamben’s Foucauldian biopolitics is in the analysis of the management of migrant populations, border security and the threat of the terrorism. As I mentioned in the introduction, in his book *State of Exception*, Agamben discusses the extra-legal detainment of potential “terror” suspects and establishment of states of exception in the United States in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks.¹¹⁹ Here, he argues that states of exception have become a “lasting practice of government” (7) in the west. Extending Agamben’s critique in his analysis of biopolitics and terrorism in twenty-first century in “From the Race War to the War on Terror,” Randy Martin also discusses America’s response to September 11th attacks. Martin presciently argues that “terror” has now superseded “race” as constituting the primary threat to the social body in contemporary western democracies. For him, the threat of terror has now emerged as “a geopolitical fissure precisely when race could not sustain the work of organising international and intra-national conflicts in the service of some unified national interest” (263). While Martin primarily focuses on the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq during George W. Bush’s

administration, it is also true that the response at the level of government and police services to the recent terror threats within Europe—including the Paris attacks in November 2015 and in Nice on July 14th 2016—is indicative of the biopolitical paradigm which operates in contemporary society. In an attempt to police and, ideally, eliminate the terror risk, disciplinary measures of social control—such as surveillance, increased securitisation and, most significantly, the establishment of states of exception in Europe cities in order to spatially regulate populations—have become normalised in most public spaces. Arguably, the threat from the terrorist and the control of migrants at the European border are now fundamental to the relationship between the management of space and the construction of the figure of the “human” in the twenty-first century.

Finally, the methodological approach to biopolitics and space which underline this project are also relevant to the work of other post-millennial black British novelists such as Caryl Phillips, Bernadine Evaristo, Courttia Newland and Brian Chikwava, among others. Like Gurnah and Levy, these writers are also concerned with the displacement of black populations, the rise of ultra-nationalism and other forms of political and social exclusion in twenty-first century Britain and, most importantly, the marginalised experiences of the myriad of ethnic identities that call Britain ‘home.’ These novelists draw attention to the suppressed histories of slavery, racism and migration which have been erased from the grand narrative of British history. To conclude, I have emphasised the role of migrants and migrant narratives in developing a positive biopolitics where new spaces are established, borders are redefined and alternative modes of affiliation are instituted. By remapping hegemony spaces, these novels suggest that both the movement of bodies and the production of literary texts can break down borders.

Notes

- ¹ Abdulrazak Gurnah discusses his experiences growing up in Zanzibar in *Writing Across Worlds* (2004) and in a interview on www.politico.ie
- ² Levy's literary influences and early life are discussed by Lawrence Scott in his foreword to *Contemporary Critical Perspectives: Andrea Levy* (2014), edited by Jeannette Baxter and David James.
- ³ See "Of Other Spaces" by Michel Foucault, translated by Jay Miskowiec in *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring 1986), pp. 22-27.
- ⁴ More recently, in the book *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place* (2004), Nirmal Puwar considers the relationship between space and the concept of the human in multi-cultural Britain. She examines the presence of racialised bodies in public spaces— such as government, civil service, judiciary or the police—where they have been historically excluded. Following Henri Lefebvre, Puwar argues that the connection between bodies and specific spaces is reproduced and reinforced over time. For her, whiteness has the "privilege of being racially unmarked" (8) and middle-class, white bodies produce the "standard neutral space" (156). Historically, some bodies are configured as having a right to belong to a specific space, while others are "marked out as trespassers, who are, in accordance with how both space and bodies are imagined (politically, historically, and conceptually) circumscribed as being out of place... they are space invaders" (8). For Puwar, when racialised bodies occupy spaces where they are not the "somatic norm" (1), they produce disorienting effects and can reshape and reconfigure that space.
- ⁵ See Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1997) and Katherine McKittrick's *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and Cartographies of Struggle* (2006).
- ⁶ This point is made by James Proctor in his book *Dwelling Places: Postwar Black British Writing* (2003)
- ⁷ In her article "Andrew Salkey; The British Home and the Intimacies Within," Kate Houlden emphasises the role of the British home in *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* (1960) and argues that Salkey situates the homosexual protagonist, Johnnie within the British home as an "unsettling presence" (97) which undermines the concept of home associated with white, middle-class family life.

The novel also demonstrates the anxieties surrounding the private space of home among white Britons in the post-war era as racial “others” were perceived to be permeating the British home because of the increase in economic migrants relocating to Britain from the West Indies.

Following Sara Ahmed, Houlden argues that Salkey’s novel can be seen as “a meeting point, a literary exploration of queer and migrant lives conducted in the intimate space of the British home” (106). By focusing on a homosexual migrant subject within the British home, Salkey’s novel hints at alternative communities and affiliations based on “cross-racial or same-sex intimacies” (108). See also Nadia Ellis “Black Migrants, White Queers and the Archive of Inclusion in Post-war London.”

⁸ In particular, the Notting Hill Carnival became the focus of tension between the police and the black community from the mid-1970s. As Proctor argues in *Writing Black Britain*, for the black community, the carnival “symbolised and celebrated a resilience to authoritarian threats to police it off the streets” (95). For many white people, the carnival represented “what was felt to be an increasingly menacing black presence” (195).

⁹ See Paul Gilroy’s *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture* (2004) and Imogen Tyler’s *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (2013)

¹⁰ Paul Gilroy draws on Foucault and Agamben’s work on biopolitics by examining the relationship between British imperialism and contemporary racist society in his book *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Colour Line* (2000). While Foucault argued that the biological management of populations and the disciplining of knowledge produced modern racism, Gilroy refers specifically to the restrictive and racist concept of humanism and ‘the human’ which were advanced by Enlightenment philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and David Hume. For him, these philosophers created an exclusionary concept of subjectivity which is still relevant today:

Enlightenment pretensions towards universality were punctured from the moment of their conception in the womb of the colonial space. Their very foundations were de-stabilised by their initial exclusionary configuration: by the consistent endorsement of “race” as a central political and historical concept and by the grave violence done to the central image of man by the exigencies of colonial power, which offered a path towards the prison of exotic status as the only escape route from terror. (65)

As Gilroy argues, although colonialism has revealed the “brutal exclusionary nature” (65) of western humanism, it is necessary to investigate why the category of “race” still has the power to “orchestrate

our social, economic, cultural and historical experiences" (72). Gilroy echoes Agamben's argument when he describes modern nations as "camps" (68); however, Agamben's analysis is very general and ignores the material conditions of race, gender and religious discrimination in his discussion of "bare life." By contrast, Gilroy is concerned with the very specific racist practices and policies at the heart of the modern British nation. Emphasising the "territorial, hierarchical and militaristic qualities" (68) of modern nations, Gilroy points to the dehumanisation of those "who [fall] beyond the boundaries of the official community" (68) or do not have a national government to protect them. This is particularly relevant to asylum seekers or other stateless individuals who are at the mercy of the host nation and are often dehumanised and excluded.

¹¹ As Hall et al argue, in the seminal text *Policing the Crisis* (1978), the threat of the black mugger was the focus of scare campaigns in 1970s.

¹² In an article entitled "Lost Years: The Occlusion of West Indian Women Writers in the Early Canon of Black British Writing," Sandra Courtman notes that there is an absence of research on black women writing in the 60s and 70s in Britain. She discusses the male domination of the black British literary canon and compiles a bibliography of black women's writing during the period. These writers including Beryl Gilroy, Buchi Emecheta and Merle Hodge are precursors to writers such as Andrea Levy, Bernadine Evaristo and Zadie Smith. Critics such as Hazel Carby and Amrit Wilson also began publishing their work around this time.

¹³ See "The Writing of *The Long Song*" by Andrea Levy which is available at www.andrealevy.co.uk and, also, Levy's interview with Susan Alice Fischer in *Contemporary Critical Perspectives: Andrea Levy*.

¹⁴ Irele underlines its complexity and fragmented nature of African literature. For instance, unlike European literatures, it is not a national or unifying literature because it is written in a multiplicity of indigenous and European languages.

¹⁵ The deconstruction of the essentialist concept of black subjectivity in black British writing is discussed by Stuart Hall in his seminal essay "New Ethnicities" and by James Proctor in *Writing Black Britain*. In his analysis of black subjectivity and cultural politics in twentieth-century Britain in "New Ethnicities," Hall notes that "black experience"(266) was constructed as a "singular and unifying framework"(266) across very different migrant communities from the 1950s onwards. As I mentioned earlier, black cultural forms contested stereotypes of blackness and, as Hall claims, presented "the

counter-position of a positive black imagery” (266) in order to challenge “relations of representation” (266) in British culture and society. Black writers were “critical of the way blacks were positioned as the unspoken and invisible ‘other’ of predominantly white aesthetic and cultural discourses” (266). However, from the 70s and 80s onwards, Hall argues that there was a shift in black cultural politics which undermined fixed racial categories and questioned the construction of an essentialist black subject. There was a recognition that black is a “politically and culturally constructed category which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories” (268). Hall argues that, at this time, the role of gender, class, sexuality, race and ethnicity in the formation of subjectivity came to the fore. Cultural politics shifted to a “contestation over what it [meant] to be British” (273) as opposed to focusing on rigid categories of racial identification and this was reflected in literary production at the time. Writers such as David Dabydeen, Ben Okri, Hanif Kureishi, Caryl Phillips, Fred D’Aguiar, Jackie Kay and Merle Hodge pay attention to what James Proctor describes in *Writing Black Britain* as “the historicity of the black British experience” (195) in their work. However, black British literary production from the 80s and 90s onwards was also characterised by “the diminishing need to speak for a singular, coherent, ‘representative’ community” (195).

¹⁶ He developed his work on biopower and biopolitics in his lectures at the College De France and his most significant work on this topic was disseminated at the lectures from 1975-1979 which were later published as *Society Must be Defended* (2003), *Security, Territory and Population* (2007) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008).

¹⁷ Agamben discusses the exclusion and marginalisation of Jews during World War Two in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, *The State of Exception* (2005) and *Remnants of Auschwitz* (2002).

¹⁸ Anthologies such as *Black Europe and the African Diaspora* (2009) and texts such as *The Black Atlantic* (1993), *Against Race* (2000) and *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (2004) by Paul Gilroy describe the complex cultural and geographic relationship between Europe and the African Diaspora.

¹⁹ Stylistically, Gurnah’s writing marks a departure from debates in the African novel based on concepts of authentic African identity as rooted in the oral tradition or a pre-colonial identity. At the same time, he does not attempt to perform an analysis of African identity in a post-colonial world and is critical of any hegemonic discourse including African nationalisms.

²⁰ While he critiques the dominance of European cultural values, Gurnah differs from writers such as Ngugi Wa' Thiongo—who advocates the use of indigenous African languages—favouring English as the primary mode of expression. In his book *Decolonising the Mind* (1981), Ngugi describes the dominance of the English and French languages in Africa as a “means of spiritual subjugation” (9). The curtailment of indigenous African languages by the colonial powers inhibited the process by which the traditional cultural, ideological and social values of African societies were disseminated. Overall, Ngugi argues that the process of colonialism and more recently globalisation, promotes cultural and linguistic uniformity, which negates indigenous African cultures and languages. In Ngugi's view, for an African to write in English or French is tantamount to the total negation of African cultural identity. In an interview with Harish Trivedi for the *Writing Across Worlds* (2004) series, Ngugi states that the use of English alienated him from his reality since it “did not reflect the human condition as expressed in the actualities of my history and, of my environment” (330). By writing in Gikuyu, Ngugi sought to destabilise the hierarchy of language instituted by colonialism which placed English at the top and, to strive for equality between African and European languages internationally. Arguably, the role of English as a global language in capitalist expansion can be perceived as a mode of cultural and social control which is integral to the administration of a biopolitical society. Biopolitics, in the Foucauldian sense, promotes adherence to prescribed social norms through the regulation of populations. For Ngugi, the colonisation of Africa by European languages eradicated African identity, while instilling Europe values and culture amongst African populations. For instance, in *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi recalls that children were regularly beaten in the colonial school system in Kenya for speaking in Gikuyu instead of English. Consequently, the physical violence against indigenous people during the process of colonisation coincided with a simultaneous violence of representation, where narratives of space and identity were monopolised by western cultural production, a process which continues with the spread of globalisation. For Ngugi, language is indistinguishable from culture. He claims that the supremacy of European languages reinforced the concept of Europe as the centre of the world: an intellectual and cultural hub from which social and moral progress emanated.

²¹ Foucault briefly alludes to the relationship between biological racism and colonial domination in the in the 1975-76 lecture series at the Collège De France entitled “Society Must Be Defended.” In the post-millennial context, sociologist Imogen Tyler examines the relationship between Foucauldian

biopolitics and “abject subjects” such as asylum seekers and illegal immigrants in modern neo-liberal Britain in her book *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (2013).

²² In *Revolting Subjects*, Tyler argues that asylum seekers, migrants and other marginalised groups have become “national abjects” (9) as a result of security fears, terror threats and stricter border controls. These “national abjects” are construed as a “parasitical drain and threat to scarce national resources” (9). Focusing exclusively on twenty-first century Britain and influenced by Foucault, Agamben, Bhabha, Bauman and Rancière, Tyler discusses the ways in which migrants, refugees, gypsies and “chavs” become stigmatised as human waste and deemed worthless.

²³ In the article “The Ethics of Encounter, Unreading, Unmapping the Imperium,” Michael J. Shapiro argues that— throughout the history of map-making— place names and spatial practices of certain people are effaced by those of others. Maps of nation states dominate the discourse of international relations. Analyses of global violence and conflict are state-centred and based on concepts of collective national identity. Shapiro describes conflicts or wars that take place outside the official confines of geopolitically-oriented cartography as being excluded from the ethical framework which governs international relations. Moral boundaries, according to Shapiro, are constituted by a “state sovereignty commitment” (61) which results in a “radical circumspection of the kinds of persons and groups recognised as worthy subjects of moral solicitude” (63).

²⁴ Maps are an important feature of colonial literature; the most notable examples are in *Heart of Darkness* and H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885).

²⁵ See Carl Schmitt’s *Political Theology* (1922).

²⁶ The Jews were saved from the Egyptians by Moses, their *shepherd* and pastor.

²⁷ As Slavoj Žižek argues in *The Ticklish Subject* (1999), the abjection and exclusion of migrants renders them “structurally displaced, out of joint within a given social whole” (269). However, this exclusion and exception really embodies a type of universality. Migrants, for Žižek are “the true nation” (279) because they emphasise the fantasy of origins. He argues that the preoccupation with roots and national belonging “is the phantasmic screen which conceals the fact that the subject is already thoroughly rootless, that his true position is the void of universality” (259).

²⁸ The novel asserts the continuing significance of the Christian sovereign in supposedly secular modern political processes such as citizenship and immigration.

²⁹ This explication of Carl Schmitt and his interpretation of *nomos* and sovereignty can be found in *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (2010) by Wendy Brown, Zone Books, New York.

³⁰ In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben argues that the camp consists of a prolonged *state of exception* where normal legal order is suspended regardless of whether or not atrocities are committed. He cites the 1991 example of the Bari stadium in Italy as a camp. Italian police herded illegal Albanian immigrants into the stadium and held them against their will before deporting them back home. Similarly, the *zones d'attentes* in French airports where foreigners asking for refugee status are detained are also examples of camps in operation in modern Europe.

³¹ In *Revolting Subjects*, Imogen Tyler discusses the marginalisation and exclusion of travellers and welfare recipients.

³² For a discussion of Nazism and biopolitics, see *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics* (2013) by Roberto Esposito.

³³ In *Revolting Subjects*, Imogen Tyler describes Britain as having an “asylum invasion complex” (76) and discusses the ways in which the “relentless dehumanisation of [migrants and asylum seekers] is central to neoliberal governmentality” (76).

³⁴ In *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture* (2004), Gilroy suggests that ideology relating to the defence of national boundaries has infiltrated the English national consciousness to such an extent that it summarily manifests itself in sporting and other community-based events. “Two World Wars and one World Cup” (116) has been the chant of choice for supporters of the English National Football team, for over fifty years, according to Gilroy. Sporting events are like pseudo-wars emphasising fraternal solidarity and national pride. Gilroy singles out international football matches as a type of nation-building exercise, where very specific masculinist, class-bound conceptions of Englishness are reinforced through street violence, the taunting of police officers, foreign fans and non-white Britons. Moreover, Gilroy argues that the idealisation of the past and antipathy towards migrants conveys a “need to get back to the place or moment before the country lost its moral and cultural bearings” (97). The development of an “ethnic myth” (97) associated with the ‘superiority’ of white Englishness—evoking the pride of its once mighty empire and, later on, its moral and military victory over Nazism—reflects an “underlying hunger for reorientation” (97) towards an elusive concept of Englishness and accounts for the disavowal of “pluralism and the irreversible fact of multiculturalism” (97) in modern Britain. For Gilroy, the contemporary reality of multiculturalism and globalisation has

been repressed by maintaining the fantasy of a white identity. In this restrictive view of national belonging, racial, cultural or religious difference is perceived as *unheimlich* and a threat to the imagined racial purity of the national space. Gilroy describes this inability to mourn the break-up of the empire and the racist treatment of postcolonial migrants as “postimperial melancholia” (98).

³⁵ In the biopolitical state, where ethnic purity is a way of maintaining a unitary identity, a migratory population such as the Roma people are a threat to the proliferation of an uncontaminated identity.

³⁶ In *States of Injury* (1995), Wendy Brown, in her Foucauldian analysis of power, examines the way that marginalised groups such as welfare recipients are subordinated, politicised and defined by the discourses of marginalisation.

³⁷ In his article “The Biopolitics of Otherness” (2001), Didier Fassin argues, in his study of French immigration, that a new phenomenon has appeared in the asylum process of Europe; the immigrant body is now the primary political focus when reviewing asylum applications. This is contrasted with previous history of requests for status based on persecution for religious or political beliefs. The Human Rights Act, which is enforced by the European Court of Human rights, was introduced in 1998. Article Three of this act prohibits torture and inhuman/degrading treatment or punishment. This suffering covers naturally-occurring physical and mental illness, which can be exacerbated by treatment stemming from conditions of detention or neglect. This has led to an increase in asylum seekers accessing medical treatment in Europe. The British government introduced restrictions on access to the NHS for overseas visitors and asylum seekers in April 2004 to curb the tide of what is known as ‘health tourism’. Significantly, the body has become the site of inscription for the politics of immigration defining the biopolitics of otherness. See Fassin, Didier. “The Biopolitics of Otherness: Undocumented Foreigners and Racial Discrimination in French Public Debate”. *Anthropology Today*. 17:1 (2001), 3-7. On Human Rights, see www.echr.coe.int for full text of the Human Rights Act. Article Three: The Prohibition of Torture. No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. For information on the British immigration system, see also www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk.

³⁸ The mobility of the medical profession is also remarked upon in the novel. Humanitarian organisations such as Doctors without Borders/ *Medecins Sans Frontieres* are aptly titled, as they move across borders, transcending the authority of national governments and operating unilaterally. Recounting his time in the internment camps in Zanzibar, Saleh discusses a severe bout of malaria,

which almost killed him. He was treated eventually by a Swedish doctor whom Saleh describes as “exercising the authority a European doctor possesses in a country such as ours” (233).

³⁹ In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben asserts that the 1679 *habeas corpus* writ constitutes the relation between the body and democracy. *Habeas corpus* is translated as “you will have a body to show” (124) and for Agamben, it constitutes the “first recording of bare life as the new political subject” (123). In order to be enforced, the law needs a *body*, as opposed to the *citizen* and all his/her attendant rights, and it is the task of democracy to both subject and protect this body, the *corpus* or ‘bare life’. According to Agamben “corpus is a two-faced being, the bearer both of subjection to sovereign power and of individual liberties” (125). In *Homo Sacer*, he also argues that the integration of medicine and politics is the enactment of the sovereign ban where the doctor as sovereign discerns “the point at which life ceases to be politically relevant” (142).

⁴⁰ See Zygmunt Bauman’s *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (2007) for a discussion of the construction of migrants as “human waste” (54) in late modernity.

⁴¹ Justice and morality are produced and reified as truth by the politically and militarily dominant nations. Bauman states that the capitalist west produces moral truths since “superior morality is all too often the morality of the superior” (184).

⁴² In his discussion of speech and ethics in *Fear and Trembling* (2005), Soren Kierkegaard argues that speaking allows the individual to enter into the generality of the ethical domain. By not accounting for one’s actions, an individual is answerable to no one and these actions remain private and unintelligible. Kierkegaard states that “the relief of speech is that it translates me into the universal” (98). ‘Universal’, as I argued earlier, suggests making an individual ‘intelligible’ by conforming to certain norms which are imposed by hegemony. Kierkegaard discusses Abraham’s covenant with God where he promised to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Crucially, Abraham is a central figure in all three monotheisms: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Abraham’s silence and his refusal to explain his actions to his family signified that his conduct cannot be encompassed within the ethical. His relationship or covenant is with God alone and cannot be ethically categorised in the universal sense; it transcends societal norms.

⁴³ See Lauren Berlant’s *Cruel Optimism* (2011) for a discussion of silent protest, speech acts and politics (pages 229-232).

⁴⁴ Earlier I discussed Foucault's explication of pastoral power and governmentality in "Security, Territory and Population". Foucault argues that a counter-conduct developed throughout the history of the western and eastern Christian pastorate as a refusal of the powers of judgement and surveillance inscribed in the Church. Furthermore, this counter-conduct or resistance is always produced in relation to sovereign power. He describes asceticism or the practice of extreme forms of self-discipline and self-mortification as a major form of counter-conduct throughout the history of the church. Whereas pastoral power is associated with the submission of the individual will to higher authority, asceticism is a refusal of the pastorate. It can be perceived as identification with the Christ figure rather than a submission of the individual will. The actions of both Bartleby and Saleh Omar can be conceived in terms of counter-conduct. Asceticism is, for Foucault, "egotistic self-mastery" (208):

Let's say that in asceticism there is a specific excess that denies access to an external power... Asceticism stifles obedience through the excess of prescriptions and challenges that the individual addresses to himself... [Asceticism] is an exercise of the self on the self. (208)

In "Security, Territory, Population," pastoral power was a model for the sovereign head of state. Foucault cites examples of suicide, army desertion, political insubordination, refusal to bear arms, formation of secret societies, refusal of confession, refusal to take prescribed medicines and the refusal to immunise oneself as forms of counter-conduct against administrative, religious and medical controls. He suggests that communities can also participate in form of counter-conduct in the form of hierarchical reversal where the person with the lowest reputation, honour or qualification is chosen as the leader of a group.

⁴⁵ Similarly, in *Pure Immanence* (2001), Gilles Deleuze describes *homo tantum* as a neutral life which is beyond good or evil, subjectivity or objectivity. *Homo tantum* is, for Deleuze, "a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularisation; a life of pure immanence" (28).

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the affirmative potential of zoe and nomadic politics, see Rosi Bradotti's *Transpositions* (2006) and *Nomadic Theory* (2011).

⁴⁷ In *The Gift of Death*, Derrida discusses Kierkegaard's analysis of Abraham's covenant with God in *Fear and Trembling*.

⁴⁸ Furthermore, the lack of ethical responsibility towards the migrant is inextricably tied to the use of language. In *Of Hospitality* (2000), Derrida discusses the conditionality of hospitality towards the

foreigner. Interestingly, the etymology of the word 'hospitality' derives from 'host' or in Latin *hostis* meaning 'enemy' or 'stranger'. According to Derrida, hospitality begins with an act of violence by asking the migrant to understand in and speak another language:

The foreigner who is inept at speaking the language always risks being without defence before the law of the country that welcomes or expels him; the foreigner is first of all foreign to the legal language in which the duty of hospitality is formulated, the right to asylum, its limits, norms, policing etc. He has to ask for hospitality in a language which by definition is not his own, the one imposed on him by the master of the house, the host, the king, the lord, the authorities, the nation, the state, the father etc. This personage imposes on him translation into their own language and that's the first act of violence.

(15)

Rather than ask for hospitality, Saleh retreats into his own world and his silence characterises a disavowal of the 'legal language' of hospitality.

⁴⁹ Latif and Saleh also discuss the novel and Latif tells Saleh that he loved "the impassive authority of that man's defeat, the noble futility of his life" (156).

⁵⁰ After Touré became president of Guinea in 1958, his regime became increasingly repressive throughout the sixties and seventies. Many of Touré's opponents were imprisoned or executed.

⁵¹ For a more in-depth discussion of hospitality and recognition in this passage of the novel, see David Farrier's article "Terms of Hospitality: Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*" in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*.

⁵² Novels shape the social space of empire as a hierarchy of the 'civilised', 'white', 'Christian', 'cultured' metropolis over and against the 'savage', 'black', 'amoral' inhabitants living outside Europe in colonial settlements. Novels contributed to the binaries that forged the hegemony upon which disciplinary society is constructed.

⁵³ For a perspective on cartography, colonialism and the concept of Britain as an island, see David James's *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space: Style, Landscape, Perception* (2008).

⁵⁴ In her book *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (1995), Anne McClintock discusses the ways in which colonial territories were ideologically constructed by Europeans as an empty or blank spaces which had yet to be invested with culture and civilisation. She evokes the concept of "anachronistic space" (30) to describe colonised land:

According to this trope, colonised people— like women and the working class in the metropolis— do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of modern empire as anachronistic humans, atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency- the living embodiment of the archaic *primitive* (McClintock's emphasis). (30)

⁵⁵ In the book, *Habeas Viscus: Racialising Assemblages, Biopolitics and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014), Alexander G. Weheliye is critical of Agamben's legalistic concept of bare life and his lack of engagement with the question of race. Weheliye points to the "false universality of western humanity" (135) which configures those who are not white, heteromale subjects as "exploitable subjects, literal legal no-bodies" (135).

⁵⁶ Slaves, who are, in many cases, removed from their place of birth, or born in a place where birth ties are abrogated or denied, cannot claim any rights. Arguably, it is the slave plantation as 'camp', rather than the Nazi camp, as Agamben has argued, which signals the institution of modern biopolitics. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben describes the camp as the "most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realised, in which power confronts nothing but pure life without any mediation" (171).

⁵⁷ Levy's earlier novels *Every Light in the House Burnin'* (1994), *Never Far from Nowhere* (1996), *Fruit of the Lemon Tree* (2000) and *Small Island* (2004) document the challenges that immigrants and their British-born children encounter as they attempt to integrate into British society. *Small Island* shares the thematic concerns of displacement, alienation and identity evidenced in the well-known Windrush-era novels of Sam Selvon and George Lamming. *Fruit of the Lemon Tree*, *Never Far from Nowhere* and *Every Light in the House Burnin'* depict the experiences of black women growing up in Britain in the 1970s and 80s. Levy's earlier novels, set predominantly in Britain, examine the changing cultural and social landscape in Britain as a direct result of immigration.

⁵⁸ Marc Augé discusses the relationship between the body and space in *Supermodernity* (1995):

The magical effect of spatial construction can be attributed without hesitation to the fact that the human body itself is perceived as a portion of space with frontiers and vital centres, defences and weaknesses, armour and defects. At least on the level of the imagination (entangled in many cultures with social symbolism), the body is a composite and hierarchised space which can be invaded from the outside. Examples do exist of

territories conceived in the image of the human body, but the inverse- the human body conceived as territory- is very widespread. (49)

⁵⁹ For a further discussion of racial subjugation and the effects of power and domination on the slave body, see Saidiya V. Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* (1997).

⁶⁰ In *Natural Rebels*, Beckles also suggests that women may have deployed certain "gynaecological practices" (4) to control their fertility and prevent the birth of children who would automatically become slaves. In *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1680-1838* (1990), Barbara Bush discusses the control and regulation of fertility by slave women in greater detail than Beckles. Significantly, in her article "Through an African Feminist Theoretical Lens: Viewing Caribbean Women's History Cross-culturally," Rosalyn Terborg-Penn suggests that practices of controlling or restricting pregnancy among slave women may have derived from African customs and practices. She argues that slave women played a vital role in maintaining links to slaves' African heritage.

⁶¹ In her book *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1680-1838*, Barbara Bush distinguishes between the external role of slave women in the fields or in the plantation house with that of the female slave in her own private space:

The private domestic life of the woman slave was part of the *inner*, more hidden slave community. It involved her relationship with fellow slaves, in which her actions were guided largely by the *unofficial* social and moral codes of the slaves as opposed to the *official* codes of behaviour imposed on her by the plantocracy (Bush's emphasis). (6)

⁶² Andrea Levy. Interview by Gary Younge. *The Guardian*. 30 January 2010: 1-4.

⁶³ In *The Signifying Monkey* (1988), Gates notes that in the African-American literary tradition, literacy was strongly associated with emancipation, self-assertion and equality:

The literature of the slave consisted of texts that represent impolite learning and that [the narratives] collectively railed against the arbitrary and inhumane learning which masters foisted upon slaves to reinforce a perverse fiction of the "natural" order of things. The slave, by definition, possessed at most a liminal status within the human community. To read and to write was to transgress this nebulous realm of liminality.... The text of the slave could only be read as testimony of defilement: the slave's *representation* and reversal of the master's attempt to transform a human being into a commodity, and the slave's verbal witness of the possession of a humanity shared in common with

Europeans...The slave wrote not primarily to demonstrate humane letters, but to demonstrate his or her membership of the human community (Gates' emphasis). (128)

The ability to articulate a subject position—which was abrogated in the case of slaves—is linked by Gates to the ownership of language and literature. Producing a narrative involved an assertion of subjectivity and was a social and political act of self-creation.

In *The Signifying Monkey*, Gates identifies the “trope of the Talking Book” (132) which figuratively signals the slave’s development from object or commodity to subject. The trope appears in slave narrative in various forms whereby the written text ‘speaks’ to the literate white subject but the illiterate slave experiences only the ‘silence’ of the page. The trope of the Talking Book demonstrates the difference between Africans and Europeans in western culture. By acquiring literacy and ‘talking’ to the book, slaves and former slaves were granted the status of human subject. The trope appears in five narratives: *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, As Related by Himself* (1774); *The Narrative of the Lord’s Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, A Black* (1785); *Narrative of the Enslavement of Ottobah Cugoano, A Native of Africa, Published by Himself, in the Year 1787* (1787); *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Written by Himself* (1845) and *The Life, History and Unparalleled Suffering of John Lea, the African Preacher* (1811). Moreover, by repeating the trope of the Talking Book, these narratives, in Gates’s view, contribute to the formation of an African American literary tradition, which again reinforced black peoples’ humanity in the eyes of white society.

⁶⁴ The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African was first published in London in 1789. In his autobiography, Equiano documents his life as the son of Ibo nobility, his capture and transportation to a plantation in Virginia, US. Shortly thereafter, he is purchased by a British naval officer and spends the 1760s at sea. He travels to the Caribbean and witnesses the atrocities of Caribbean slavery. Equiano’s autobiography played a crucial role in the campaign to end slavery in the British Empire. Recent scholarship by Vincent Carretta questioned Equiano’s Igbo identity and challenged the authenticity of the first section of the narrative. See Carretta’s *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-made Man* (2005).

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the structure and themes of the Slave Narrative genre see Gates’s *The Classic Slave Narratives* (1986) and Andrews’s *To Tell a Free Story* (1986).

⁶⁶ In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), Bakhtin states that “every utterance is oriented towards this apperceptive background of understanding, which is not a linguistic background but rather one composed of specific objects and different emotional expressions” (281). Andrews cites Bakhtin to emphasise the power of the white reader to determine meaning in the slave narrative and also to highlight the conditions of textual production of the genre of slave narrative.

⁶⁷ Conversely, North American Slave Narratives such as *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, Written by Himself* (1791), *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845) and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (1861) by Harriet Jacobs, were written by the slaves and adopted standard English or literary English to demonstrate the author’s intelligence and education. Slaves in the United States had regular contact with the white settler population and had a greater likelihood of acquiring literacy. Scholars such as Stanley Engerman, Orlando Patterson and James Walvin document the difference between slavery in the United States and British Empire

⁶⁸ See James Walvin’s *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire* (1992).

⁶⁹ Neo-slave narratives were also a critical comment on the appropriation of cultural differences in US neo-conservative policies of the late seventies and eighties and emphasised the continuing racial injustice faced by African-Americans in their daily lives. The political landscape of the 1980s, in particular, led to colour-blind policies which masked the social, cultural and political inequalities that had been exposed in the sixties. The Reagan administration sought to unify American culture on a national level and counteract the fragmentation of society which occurred in the sixties.

⁷⁰ In his book, *Britain’s Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide* (2013), the scholar and activist Hilary Beckles argues that reparations should be paid by Britain to descendants of Caribbean slavery because of the enormous wealth created from the labour of enslaved Africans. Beckles leads campaigns in the Caribbean, Europe and Africa to gain public support for reparations.

⁷¹ *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* was a project which ran from 2013-2015 and was based at UCL. It examined the impact of slave-ownership on the formation of modern Britain. It catalogued the compensation (£20 million pounds) received by former slave owners from the British government after abolition. This compensation was invested in industry, including the railway system. The researchers compiled a database containing the identity of all slave-owners in the British Caribbean when slavery

was abolished. The database is entitled the Encyclopaedia of British Slave-Owners. More details can be found at www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs

⁷² Prince attributes her happiness to her kindly mistress, Mrs Williams. Critics such as William Andrews, Hazel Carby in *Reconstructing Womanhood* (1987) and Jenny Sharpe in *Ghosts of Slavery* (2003) have commented on the importance of presenting benevolent slaveholders, especially mistresses, in the slave narrative. It was important for slaves not to openly condemn white slaveholders but criticise the institution of slavery itself.

⁷³ The historical information surrounding the aftermath of the publication of Prince's *History* can be founded in the extensive introduction to *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave Narrative* (2000) which is edited and prefaced by Moira Ferguson.

⁷⁴ See James Walvin's *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire* (1992).

⁷⁵ See Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2008). Second Edition.

⁷⁶ In another similarity with Prince's text, *The Long Song* contains frequent iterative which are a distinctive feature of West Indian speech and often used for dramatic emphasis. The use of iterative undermined the hegemony of colonialism and European languages. By inventing new linguistic forms, slaves created new customs and a language which represented an identity outside of that prescribed by the colonisers.

⁷⁷ Henry Louis Gates Jr discusses the link between literacy and freedom in *The Classic Slave Narratives* (1988).

⁷⁸ Henry Louis Gates discusses the importance of the trickster figure in African culture and literature in his book *The Signifying Monkey*.

⁷⁹ In her article "Through an African Feminist Theoretical Lens: Viewing Caribbean Women's History Cross-culturally," Rosalyn Terborg-Penn emphasises the role of slave women in disseminating aspects of African culture and heritage in the slave community. Hilary Beckles also discusses the role of women as cultural bearers in *Natural Rebels*. Preserving aspects of African culture allowed black slaves to maintain separate identities outside of their roles on the plantation and, most importantly, outside of the control of the white plantocracy.

⁸⁰ Toni Morrison discusses the significance of the veil and the omissions this metaphor conceals in the African-American slave narrative tradition in her seminal essay "The Site of Memory".

⁸¹ In *Natural Rebels*, Beckles discusses the prevalence of prostitution in the Caribbean. He notes that white slave owners—both male and female— often sold their female slaves as prostitutes to supplement their income. Also, some female slaves used prostitution as a means to save to buy their freedom.

⁸² For a detailed discussion of concubinage between black women and white men in Jamaica, see Lucille M. Mair's *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica 1655-1844* (2006).

⁸³ See Hazel V. Carby's *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (1987).

⁸⁴ Significantly, there is no mention of childbearing or articulation of maternal desire in Prince's account, despite the detailed discussion of her bodily suffering, including physical abuse and allusions to sexual abuse. In her article "The Body as Evidence: Resistance, Collaboration and Appropriation in *The History of Mary Prince*," Barbara Baumgartner discusses the role of the physical body in Prince's resistance to slavery and argues that Prince may potentially have deployed strategies to control her fertility. Influenced by Barbara Bush's discussion of female slaves' management of their fertility in the book *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838*, Baumgartner suggests that, although there is no direct evidence that Prince engaged in such strategies, her "failure to bear children and the absence of any articulation of desire to do so strongly suggest another sign of her refusal to support the system of slavery wherever possible" (260). In addition, Prince's husband, Daniel James, remained in Antigua and although she expressed her desire to return to him, she decided to remain in England where slavery was illegal. The white ideal of domesticity and family life is not achievable for Prince because slavery was still legal in the Caribbean and she did not want to return there as a slave. It could be argued that these gaps in relation to children, her husband and the veiled references to sexual abuse serve to highlight the unequal material and textual relations of power between black female slaves and nineteenth century white male abolitionists who advocated on behalf of slaves.

⁸⁵ Robert believes in the superiority of Europeans and also perceives his plantation workers as commodities. On his first day on the plantation, he addresses the workers and invokes the rule of private property, by advising the workers that if they do not agree to work for him, they will be evicted from the plantation and lose access to their homes and the gardens and fields they have utilised for private farming. He informs the assembled crowd that it is their duty to work and "humbly thank God

for this blessing of freedom” (171). The workers can remain on the land and continue to occupy their homes for a small rent. Robert had a paternalistic viewing of the workers, believing that “the simple negroes would surely do anything that was required of them if they were bid by him- their beloved new massa” (218). Despite his abolitionist beliefs, he perceives his relationship with the workers in terms of a master/slave dichotomy.

⁸⁶ In *Natural Rebels*, Beckles points out that children born out of relationships between slave women and white men automatically became slaves and this had significant implications for the status of black women in slavery:

Black motherhood, by implication, was conceptually and legally tied to the perpetuation of slavery while white fatherhood was alienated from the process. This matrifocal legislative approach to slave reproduction ensured that from the point of view of white society, black women’s maternity could not be separated from enslavement and degradation. Also, it meant that white men could rape, seduce and impregnate slave women, as a normal part of their common culture, without any legal or social responsibility to spouse or progeny. (133)

⁸⁷ The perceived inferiority of the West Indian planter class—particularly of planter women—in relation to British people is discussed at length in *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica 1655-1844* (2006) by Lucille Mathurin-Mair.

⁸⁸ Sharpe also points to the power relations within the novel which differentiates white and black women. Interestingly, like *The History of Mary Prince*, Bronte’s novel caused controversy about its authorship after it was published. Bronte wanted the novel to be judged on its own merits rather than within the parameters of feminine writing so the novel was first published under the title “Jane Eyre: an Autobiography, edited by Currer Bell.” Debates about the gender of the author and the very concept of feminine writing quickly ensued. For Sharpe, the separation of the editor and narrator of the text allows a “fictional character [to] speak as a woman” (37). In this way, literature can transgress the restrictive boundaries of reality and “imagine new subjectivities” (37).

⁸⁹ In her essay “Problems of Current Theories of Colonial Discourse,” Benita Parry is critical of Spivak for misconstruing the “white creole woman” (39), Bertha as the subaltern female in *Wild Sargasso Sea*. Parry argues that it is the Christophine who is the native voice in the novel. For Parry, Spivak perceives Christophine as “marking the limits of the text’s discourse” (40) instead of disrupting

it. Describing Christophine as the “black female individualist” (40) in the novel, Parry claims that she asserts herself as an “articulate antagonist of patriarchal, settler and imperialist law” (40). See “Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse” by Benita Parry in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. Eds. London: Routledge, 2002. Print. 36-44.

⁹⁰ See Moira Ferguson’s article “*Mansfield Park*: Slavery, Colonialism and Gender” for a detailed discussion of the relationship between the domestic plot in *Mansfield Park* and Sir Thomas’s journey to Antigua.

⁹¹ For instance, by the turn of the eighteenth century, it is estimated that the black population in London alone could have been as high as ten thousand. Discussion about slavery and abolition became prevalent in the print media after 1772. This was as a result of a high profile court case in which Judge Mansfield ruled that a colonial planter visiting London could not coerce his slave to return to the colonies. The Mansfield case led to an upsurge in publications relating to African slavery. Both English and Afro-British writers rallied public opinion against slavery. At the same time, Evangelical Churches, especially Methodists and Baptists, enlisted black worshippers to their congregations and facilitated black literary production. I have already mentioned the importance of slave narratives in the Abolitionist movement. In response to the growing interest in slavery, King George III established the Privy Council Committee for Trade and Plantations in February 1788 which began an investigation into the slave trade and the transportation of Africans to European colonies in British ships based in Bristol, Liverpool and London. From 1789 to 1792, the House of Commons heard evidence for and against the slave trade and, in 1792, an abolition bill was passed in the Commons only to be defeated in the House of Lords. For the next few years, the bill was defeated in the Commons by narrow margins.

⁹² See also *The Postcolonial Jane Austen* (2004) edited by You-Me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan.

⁹³ As Mee notes, when referring to the role of governesses in *Emma*, Jane Fairfax states: “There are places in town, offices, where inquiry would soon produce something—offices for the sale—not quite of human flesh—but of human intellect” (84, quoted in Mee). To which Mrs Elton replies: “Oh! My dear, human flesh! You quite shock me; if you mean a fling at the slave trade, I assure you Mr. Suckling was always rather a friend to the abolition” (84, quoted in Mee).

⁹⁴ . In *The World Republic of Letters* (2004), Pascale Casanova underlines the importance of 'classic' novels such as Austen's in the construction of literary space:

The classics are the privilege of the oldest literary nations, which, in elevating their foundational texts to the status of timeless works of art, have defined their literary capital as non-national and ahistorical- a definition that corresponds exactly to the definition that they have given literature itself. The classic embodies the very notion of literary legitimacy, which is to say what is recognised as *literature*: the unit of measurement for everything that is or will be recognised as literary (Casanova's italics). (15)

For Casanova, novelists such as Austen play a central role in deciding exactly what constitutes literature and such novels such as *Sense and Sensibility* represent a 'universal' literature. 'Classic' novels from authors such as Austen consolidate Britain's superior literary and geopolitical position.

⁹⁵ It is important to note that religion was also a source of empowerment and liberation for slaves. The message of salvation associated with Christianity— as well as the promise of a blissful afterlife free from toil— appealed to slaves. In his book *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire*, James Walvin notes that Christianity came much later to slaves in the West Indies, compared to slaves in North America. In the West Indies, planters were more reluctant to allow their slaves to be converted and baptised as it inevitably meant that they would question the legitimacy of slave-holders' authority and, most significantly, the morality of slavery. As slaves were converted to Christianity, its values were frequently fused with African spiritual beliefs such as the practice of Obeah. Most importantly, the proliferation of Christian Churches undermined slavery and fostered a sense of equality with white people. It allowed black worshippers to practice their beliefs communally and led to the emergence of black churches and, crucially, black leaders. For a more in-depth discussion of the impact of religious conversion on slavery, see Walvin's *Black Ivory*.

⁹⁶ Evelyn O'Callaghan discusses Lady Nugent's Journal and Mrs Carmichael's *Domestic Manners* at length in her book *Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939: A Hot Place, Belonging to Us* (2004), as does Bridget Brereton in her article "Text, Testimony and Gender: An Examination of some Texts by Women of the English-speaking Caribbean, from the 1770s to the 1920s." Brereton also discusses *The History of Mary Prince*.

⁹⁷ In "Text, Testimony and Gender: An Examination of some Texts by Women of the English-speaking Caribbean, from the 1770s to the 1920s," Bridget Brereton stresses that Mrs Nugent's

Journal offers little evidence or discussion of the experience of field slaves because she would have spend her time primarily in the domestic arena.

⁹⁸ In *Women Writing in the West Indies, 1804-1939*, Evelyn O'Callaghan argues that, in novels and travel writing written during slavery, white women are, in many cases, critical of abuses committed in the domestic sphere, including the sexual abuse of female slaves and the neglect of children produced from the union of female slaves and white men. Bridget Brereton also discusses the different attitudes of white women to concubinage and the sexual abuse of female slaves in "Text, Testimony and Gender: An Examination of some Texts by Women of the English-speaking Caribbean, from the 1770s to the 1920s."

⁹⁹ Discussing the phenomenology of race in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), Sara Ahmed stresses that "the world itself is more *involved* in some bodies than in others, as it takes such bodies as the contours of ordinary experience" (Ahmed's emphasis) (159). Arguing that the movement and visibility of white people is privileged and the "world is shaped by the direction taken by some [white] bodies more than others" (159), Ahmed suggests that black people historically find themselves disoriented in material landscapes dominated by whites.

¹⁰⁰ Levy discusses these incidents from Mrs Carmichael's *Domestic Manners* in the article "The Writing of *The Long Song*."

¹⁰¹ In *The History of Mary Prince*, there is also evidence of resistance in the domestic space. Crucially, Prince had an unusually high number of owners, possibly implying that she was rebellious and was frequently moved from owner to owner. Significantly, when she worked for the Woods, she claimed her debilitating illness and infirm body— as a result of the years spent in the salt mines and from physical abuse at the hands of her owners— diminished her capacity to work. However, when the Woods were away, Prince was responsible for the house and "took in washing, and sold coffee and yams and other provisions to the captains of the ships" (20). She was determined to earn enough money to buy her freedom. While not doubting the physical damage inflicted on Prince during her years as a slave, Barbara Baumgartner discusses the possibility that she withheld work as a form of resistance in the article "The Body as Evidence, Resistance, Collaboration, and Appropriation in *The History of Mary Prince*." She notes that Prince emphasised her "debilitated body" (258) during her time with the Woods, yet she took on work when she was benefitting from it financially. For Baumgartner, the inconsistencies in Prince's account at this point "narratively situates her bodily

illness in ways which allow her to exert some control over her situation” (258). While the Woods believed that they owned and controlled Prince’s body, her possible refusal of work can be interpreted as an indirect form of economic and political protest against the institution of slavery.

¹⁰² Barbara Bush discusses specific female forms of slave resistance and defiance in her book *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838* (1990).

¹⁰³ In *Natural Rebels*, Beckles cites incidences of slave women forging documents which enabled them to escape the plantation, murdering white children in their care, poisoning the food eaten by white families, withholding work, stealing and other forms of defiance and subversion.

¹⁰⁴ In the interview with Susan Alice Fischer, Levy states that she wanted to include elements of farce and humour in the novel as she had encountered these humorous incidences of slave resistance in her research. For her, these farcical and humorous interludes allow the reader to “acknowledge the real *humanity* in people. People then stop becoming just the victim of a tragedy. They become real people... they become like you and me” (Levy’s emphasis) (137).

¹⁰⁵ Again, Toni Morrison makes this point in “The Site of Memory”.

¹⁰⁶ In his book *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2002), Slavoj Žižek argues that the post-modern western world is characterised by an absence of the “Real” or the extreme violence or “destructive void” (12) at the core of reality. In other words, as western society has become increasingly consumerist, superficial and technologically-complex, what we are experiencing in daily life—which is increasingly administered and controlled biopolitically—is actually the “virtualization of our daily lives” (19) or an “artificially constructed universe” (19). Moreover, in his book *The Lacanian Subject* (1995), Bruce Fink describes the *real* in Lacanian psychoanalytic terms, as something that cannot be formulated or expressed:

The real is essentially that which resists symbolization and thus resists the dialectization characteristic of the symbolic order, in which one thing can be substituted for another.

Not everything is fungible; certain things are not interchangeable for the simple reason that they cannot be “signifierized”. They cannot be found elsewhere, as they have a Thing-like quality, requiring the subject to come back to them over and over again. The challenge Lacanian psychoanalysis accepts is that of inventing ways in which to hit the real, upset the repetition it engenders, dialectize the isolated Thing, and shake up the

fundamental fantasy in which the subject constitutes him or herself in relation to the cause (92).

However, in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Žižek argues that the reality we are immersed in is continually disturbed or haunted by “symptoms which bear witness to the fact that another repressed level of our psyche resists this immersion” (17). The real is the trauma that has never been given voice and which needs to be worked through. However, due to the traumatic and excessive nature of the real, we are unable to incorporate it into our social reality. Arguably, the omissions, silences and elisions in the novel indicate a repression of the real, the true horror of slavery which cannot be confronted. The narrative jolts and shifts remind the reader of what has been omitted or is too traumatic to reveal.

¹⁰⁷ In her article “Gender Politics and Imperial Politics: Rethinking the Histories of Empire,” Catherine Hall discusses the contemporary crisis of white identity in Britain. She alludes to rise of ultra-nationalism, the growing popularity of right-wing nationalist parties and the disenchantment with the EU among ordinary Britons (her article was published in 1995). She presciently calls for the re-imagining of white British identities which are not “rooted in a sense of imperial power and superiority but in a recognition of difference” (49). Hall emphasises the ways that the histories of Britain and empire have always been “mutually dependent” (49).

¹⁰⁸ Jacob remained with the family as a servant. Harriet Long died of cancer in 1841 and two months later, Jacob died. They were buried in the same tomb in St Mary’s Churchyard. The most notable aspect of the burial is that both Jacob and Harriet’s names are given equal importance on the gravestone commemorating their deaths, suggesting an equivalence of status in death, which was not possible while Harriet and Jacob were alive. The epitaph also mentions the different legal status of Jacob in Virginia and in London. See www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk for information on Jacob Walker.

¹⁰⁹ Carlyle was a prominent literary figure in England in the 1830s and 1840s. He was not in favour of emancipation and felt that colonial slavery was necessary as he believed that black people did not have a strong work ethic. A believer in the hierarchy of men, Carlyle considered black people inferior to whites. He anonymously published his views in the pamphlet ‘Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question’ in *Fraser’s Magazine* in 1849. It was reprinted in *The Latter Day Pamphlets* in 1853. The *Anti-Slavery Reporter* responded to Carlyle as did the philosopher John Stuart Mill. Carlyle’s views

became popular in the 1840s and 1850s. Significantly, in *Civilising Subjects*, Catherine Hall compares Carlyle's polemic to Enoch Powell's infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech one hundred years later. Carlyle was part of a political shift in the 1850s which, according to Hall, marked "a discursive break from the hegemony of universalism" (378) associated with emancipation and refocused English politics on the domestic arena. The success of writers like Carlyle in altering the ideology of emancipation illustrates the disciplinary power of literary production and the potential subjugation of geopolitical space to literary space.

¹¹⁰ In *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman argues that the memory of slavery is "not in the service of continuity" (74) but in the "contradictions and antagonism of enslavement, the ruptures of history" (74). The destruction of July's family represents what Hartman describes as "the disassociated and dispersed networks of affiliation" (74) that resulted from slavery.

¹¹¹ Audio of interview with Andrea Levy talking to Nicola Barranger is available on www.interviewonline.co.uk.

¹¹² Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993) is the seminal text on British slavery.

¹¹³ See Hilary Beckles' book *Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide*. In 2007, shortly before the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, the serving British Prime Minister, Tony Blair expressed sorrow for the slave trade. Beckles and other West Indian scholars, including Verene Shepherd, continue to argue the case for reparations from Britain.

¹¹⁴ Significantly, in *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838*, Barbara Bush has suggested that the legacies of slavery and colonialism is evident in the status of Caribbean women in contemporary West Indian society.

¹¹⁵ In *Poetics of Relation* (2010), Glissant argues, that although the plantation is closed, "the word derived from it remains open" (75) and overshadows modern post-colonial societies. The creation of what Glissant terms the "second plantation matrix" (73) which leads to the marginalisation and destitution of many black people today reflects the role of spatial regulation in maintaining inequitable geographies.

¹¹⁶ While a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between democratic government, biopolitics and multiculturalism is warranted, it is beyond the scope of this project. In *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics* (2010), Jacques Ranciere states that modern governments are operated on the basis of consensus. They concentrate on blurring difference, defining the needs and common interests of the

population. More specifically, for Ranciere, modern governments function through the dismissal of any genuine political engagement, in favour of expelling surplus subjects and negotiating conflicts or crises, with the help of learned experts much like the NGO representatives in *By the Sea*. A consensual politics ignores the empirical conditions of those who are marginalised and subordinated which undermines policies of diversity or multiculturalism. Equally, consensus strives to remove any fissures between law and fact or appearance or reality. Ranciere argues that genuine political engagement and democratic process should be a form of dissensus which highlights the concealed inequality and voicelessness of those rejected by society and denied subjectivity:

The question of a political subject is not caught between the void of man and the plenitude of the citizen with its actual rights. A political subject is a capacity for staging scenes of dissensus. The difference between man and citizen is the opening of an interval for political subjectivisation. Not only do they bring the inscription of rights to bear against situations in which those rights are denied, but they construct the world in which those rights are valid, together with the world in which they are not. They construct a relation of inclusion and a relation of exclusion. (69)

Ranciere stresses that economic globalisation requires consensual government to endorse a particular community's way of life. Consensual government reinforces the distinction between public/private and political /social to ascertain precisely who is qualified to take care of communal issues and who is unable to think beyond private and immediate concerns. The democratic process should be the dismantling of this boundary. Consensus, like globalisation, states that while it is acceptable for people to have different interests, culture, values and aspirations nevertheless there is one unique reality to which everything is related. By contrast, genuine political engagement should be conceptualised as the inscription of the part of those who have no part. This is not necessary just the excluded but all should extend to every member –official and unofficial— of a given community.

Ranciere emphasises the role of 'newcomers' who constitute new voices and opinions. This concept of democracy is influenced by Book III of the *Laws* where Plato lists all the qualifications of those who claim to have a legitimate authority to rule. He lists his preference of masters over slaves, the old over the young and the educated over the unschooled. However, at the end of the list, he describes what he calls God's choice; the power gained by the casting of lots or pure chance. This is an example of genuine democratic engagement where the voices of those who are not specifically qualified to rule or

who may have been politically excluded come to the fore. According to Ranciere, the political subject must be identified “with the totality made by those who have no qualification. I call it the count of the uncounted or the part of those who have no part” (70). Democracy is really inclusion of the invisible or the marginalised; it is a political event which overthrows the existing order of domination.

¹¹⁷ This point is also made by Thomas Lemke in *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (2011) and by Alexander G. Weheliye in *Habeas Viscus* (2014).

¹¹⁸ Following Israeli-Palestinian sociologist, Huneida Ghanem, Lentin discusses *femina sacra* (the female version of Agamben’s *homo sacer* or bare life) in order to analyse the precarious position of women in relation to the state (particularly in conflict zones). She cites the example of rape camps in the former Yugoslavia where women were reduced to “vehicle[s] of ethnic cleansing, became femina sacra, at the mercy of a male sovereign power: she who can not only be killed but also impregnated, yet who cannot be sacrificed due to her impurity” (5).

¹¹⁹ Judith Butler has also discussed the relationship between terrorism and states of exception in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*.

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